



**“Dr. Annie Besant’s Educational Philosophy,
Educational Experiments and Contribution
to Indian Education”**

Submitted By
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1970-71

**A Brief Abstract of the Thesis
on
" Dr. Annie Basant's Educational
Philosophy, Educational Experiments & Contribution
to Indian Education ".**

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**Enrolment No.E-4154
Admission No. 72369**

1970-71

P r e f a t o r y N o t e

This study works out exclusively the educational thought of Dr. Annie Besant in its Indian setting. The chief aim which this work tries to foster is to provide a systematic explanation of Annie Besant's educational views. The emphasis throughout this work is expositive rather than critical. I have fully tried to give a detailed exposition of her philosophy with its metaphysical, ethical and psychological foundation and its practical application to the field of education. Annie Besant's versatile genius made it possible for her to pinpoint every issue under the sky, from birth control to God. Annie Besant proved to be a procession in one person as she casts her nets very wide, touching the social, religious, educational, political and philosophical fields, but as the present work is restricted to the interpretation of Annie Besant's educational thought so the other cognate fields of less significance have not been touched at all.

Claim of Originality of this work:

I have used, lavishly, the works of Annie Besant and her other associates in order to explain in detail the topics outlined in the synopsis of this dissertation, so a large number of quotations from her works can be easily found. This work is an original study to present Annie Besant's educational thought and other allied views concerning her scheme

pf Indian national education, though her utterances on various educational topics have been collected from her works and put together in an attempt to let Annie Besant speak herself on her educational thought . But inspite of her long and many quotations recorded in this work, I claim that this work is an original one, as it tries to present Annie Besant as an educationist which has not been done by any scholar so far.

Sources Used:

While working on this work I have used the following sources:-

- (a) Annie Besant's own books, lectures, tracts, pamphlets and articles which cover a variety of subjects;
- (b) Books written about Annie Besant by her close associates and critics;
- (c) Other general books which support or criticise her views or touch the general outline of this work;
- (d) Discussions and interviews with the living associates of Annie Besant;
- (e) Long tours of those places where Annie Besant lived and worked;
- (f) Use of libraries. I have spent many months, with books, magazines and newspapers, in the libraries of Indian section of Theosophical Society ,Varanasi and the Library of the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras.

Original Contribution of this Work to the Educational Literature:

This work clearly makes an original contribution to the educational literature as it aims to make:-

- (a) A co-ordinated study of Annie Besant's educational-reformist views in the light of Indian philosophy;
- (b) A study of the Social purpose of Annie Besant's educational reforms;
- (c) An investigation into Annie Besant's goal of Indian national life; and
- (d) A study of the contributions of Annie Besant to special aspects of Indian Education.

The present study seeks to solve the above noted aims and thus proves to be a very important document of Annie Besant's educational philosophy, experiments and contribution to Indian Education.

A Brief Abstract of the Thesis

Chapter I entitled "Historical Introduction" is of an introductory nature. It seeks to outline the many-faceted impact which British educational policy of the early nineteenth century had on India. Here the educational policy as exemplified in Macaulay's Minute and Wood's Despatch has been thoroughly discussed. Its imposition on indigeneous system of education and consequent destruction of the ideals and values of ancient Indian education have been explained in detail.

In this Chapter the Educational Reform Movements of the early and later years of the 19th century, to which the British impact gave birth, have also been seen in detail. The life and educational works of the early pioneers of the Educational Reform Movements have been taken note of. Here the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Brahmo Samaj Movement, Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen and their contribution to the education of the Bengali Society has been seen. The other similar educational efforts in different parts of India have also been given a detailed mention in this Chapter. Bombay Reform Movements run by Hindus and Parsis have been discussed. We find in this Chapter a discussion on the Hindu Missionary Society of Gajananrao Vaidya, Parsi Society of Framji Cowsji Banajee, Prarthana Samaj of Ranade.

Chapter II "Origins and Background of Annie Besant's

Educational Philosophy", is divided into four parts. Instead of splitting up her personality into watertight compartments, which would make this study unscientific and unrealistic, it is considered proper to study the origin and development of her ideas under the following heads and sub-heads:-

(A) Annie Besant's Early Life and Works:

- (a) Early life of Annie Besant.
- (b) The Inner development of Annie Besant and her works:-
 - (i) Annie Besant as a Free-thinker Theist;
 - (ii) Annie Besant as an Atheist and a National Secularist;
 - (iii) Annie Besant as a Fabian Secularist; and
 - (iv) Annie Besant as a Theosophist.

(B) Environmental Factors which shaped her Philosophy:

- (i) Formal Education - Annie Besant's early and later educational pursuits.
- (ii) The influence of some persons - influence of Miss Ellen Marryat, William Prowting Roberts, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Rev. Charles Voysey, W - D - , Dr. E.B. Aveling, W.T.Stead, G.B. Shaw and H.P.B.

The story of the influences of some persons over Annie Besant's life and work does not finish by mentioning only ten names of persons who influenced her course of life by one way or the other. There were also a large number of way-farers who put their impact, that may not be of very

great significance in her life but which did help in moulding her life and shaping her philosophy. Few names of some importance can be mentioned: Miss Arundale, George S. Arundale, John Burns, Herbert Burrows, Rev. Mocure Conway, G.W. Foote, Henry M. Hyndmas, Rev. Steward D. Headlam, George Lansbury, William Morris, Col. H.S. Olcott, A.P. Sinnett, Countess Constance Wachtmeister, S.V. Subramanyam Aiyar, Esther Bright, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Bhagwan Dass and many others.

(iii) The Influence of Books and Authors:

Annie Besant was greatly influenced by the books and the authors. From her very childhood she was so much fascinated by the rich depth of books that she used to keep a list of books that she read. At the young age of seven years she was quite mature to understand Milton's 'Paradise Lost', and had studied Plato, Dante, Spencer and other great masters of literature and philosophy. This habit of reading remained with her throughout her long life. The rich style of her writings clearly shows how much was she indebted to the influence of the great masters of literature.

(iv) Annie Besant's personal sufferings were the birth pangs where in a realistic attitude about life was shaped, which had greatly contributed to the development of her various philosophical outlooks. The death of her father, when Annie Besant was hardly of five years, unhappy married life which dated when Annie Besant was hardly of nineteen

years, the deprivation of her mother and her rejection by the orthodox academic world - were the great shocks which made her firm as a rock to stand erect against the future problems of her life, which she successfully solved.

(v) The success of her Early Experiments:

Sufferings, no doubt, improve the character of a person to a great extent, unless they do not completely overpower that individual. Whatever Annie Besant's ability, however, strongly her mind, it would have been really of no profit, if her early experiments had proved a complete failure. Though she had to undergo difficulties of a temporary nature, yet she was successful in most of her experiments she made both in England and in India. The important experiments worthy of mention were:

- (a) First Lecture in the Spring of 1873,
- (b) The Matchgirls Strike,
- (c) Her Success in the Knowlton Case, and
- (d) Fight for the Election to the London School Board in 1888.

(vi) The Outer appearance of her philosophy:

Annie Besant's thought, as we have already explained in this Chapter, is very rich and varied. She has enriched the several angles of philosophy with great wisdom and has explained her philosophy as a historian of Indian philosophy. Her unique character derives its material from the fact that

she is a historian of Indian culture and thought possessing the art of a philosopher to handle the intricate problems. In this aspect of her versatality she presents a sign of her great vision. Annie Besant tries to explain a special line of thought which enables her to pull the different strings of philosophy, one by one, in constructing a meaningful school of thought. Therefore it would be worthwhile to examine the outer appearances of Annie Besant's philosophy for having a fuller understanding of her thought.

In this portion of the Chapter the following important role of Annie Besant's thought have been discussed:-

Annie Besant's Principles of Historian of Indian Philosophy:

- (a) Annie Besant's Principles of Historical Study of Philosophy; and
- (b) Annie Besant's methods in pursuing the historical study of Indian Philosophy.
- (c) Causes that led to Annie Besant's Arrival in India in 1893: The causes which have been explained in detail in this part are:-
 - (a) Interest in Indian Situation,
 - (b) Theosophical work,
 - (c) Call for Educational Renaissance of Indian
 - (d) Attachment by Previous Incarnations.
- (d) Educational Reform Movement underway at the time of Annie Besant's arrival, e.g., Revivalists like

Dayananda and Vivekananda and Modernists like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

In this portion the Indian educational renaissance in India, which had taken shape at the time of Annie Besant's arrival, has been briefly discussed.

Annie Besant was of 46 when she came to India, Dayananda was already assassinated ten years back and his influence was carried by his disciples, Vivekananda was of 30 and Syed Ahmed was of 76. All these reformers, though of different ages and ideologies but had one thing in common that they had done a very remarkable spade work for the cause of Indian education and had designed some solid educational policies according to their philosophical outlook.

Chapter III is entitled "Philosophical Basis of Annie Besant's Educational Philosophy". In this Chapter I have dealt with the philosophical bases of Annie Besant which had compelled her to participate in the educational activities. Annie Besant was primarily a philosopher and had tried to develop her philosophical outlook on the basis of her thorough study of religion in England and In India, she had made long discussions with philosophers to understand and clear her doubts about religions, about the attributes and existence of God, about Soul and the other allied subjects, and after joining Theosophy she had made discussions with other Theosophists, those discussions had later on helped her to develop the terminology and theories of

Theosophy.

After coming to India Annie Besant adopted Hinduism and thus the traditional sealed secrets of Hinduism were known to her and had overpowered her. She studied comparative religions and developed a philosophical mind. Therefore Annie Besant's religious attitudes are not of unquestioning acceptance but she tested every idea which crept up in her mind on the touchstone of her genuine reasoning.

In this Chapter Annie Besant's philosophical bases had been divided into two parts for detailed discussions:-

(a) Metaphysical concepts of the Self, Truth, Yoga, God, The Problem of Evil, Dharma, Place of Desire (Kamaloka), Nishkama Bhakti (Disinterested Devotion).

(b) Ethical concepts of Tolerance, Self-sacrifice, Co-operation, etc.

Chapter IV deals with "The Psychological Bases of her Educational Thought". In this Chapter Annie Besant's faith in Indian Psychology has been discussed in detail by giving her interpretation of some psychological terms such as character, consciousness Emotion, Desire, Will and Thought-Power, etc.

Chapter V: Her Concept of "The Indian System of Education during the Vaidic Period" traces out the educational history of Vaidic period which Annie Besant liked to revive for the educational renaissance of India. In this Chapter Annie Besant

approach to some educational aspects particularly to the objectives and functions of the Vaidic Education, Curriculum, Methods of Teaching, Discipline, Education of Women, Importance of Child, Teacher-Training, Vocational Education and the Development of the Total Personality of the Individual have been discussed in detail.

Chapter VI is entitled "Her Experiments in the Reform of Indian Education". This Chapter has been divided into three parts:

(a) Revival of the Spirit of Vaidic Education and Culture through the restoration of the ancient four-faceted programme of (i) the acquisition of the holy literature of India, (ii) Intellectual Training, (iii) Moral Training, and (iv) Physical Training.

(b) Incorporation of the assimilable principles of Western education into a sound scheme of National Education for India.

(c) Educational Experiments (i) Her contribution to the passing of the Compulsory Elementary Education Act and Religious Education Act by the Madras Parliament in 1915 and 1917. (ii) Establishment of Schools and Colleges designed to combine the best elements of Western and Ancient Indian Culture, e.g., the Central Hindu College, Benares (1898), the Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar (1906), the Central Hindu Girls School, Benares (1904), the Women College Benares (1916),

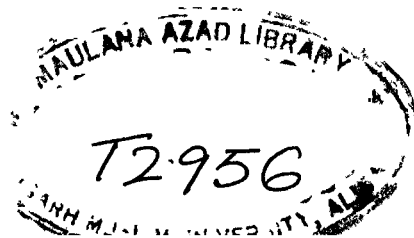
the Madanapalle College in Madras (1915), the National University in Madras (1918) besides schools and colleges in various parts of India, (iii) started the society for the promotion of National Education in 1917. (iv) Framed the plan of "a Central University of India" in 1910.

All these experiments have been discussed in this Chapter as this Chapter is the heart and soul of the whole work. In this Chapter important sources in the form of old newspapers edited by Annie Besant, have been greatly used, so that her experiments may be clearly discussed.

Chapter VII deals with her contribution to special aspects of Indian Education. Here the original contribution to different stages of education have been thoroughly discussed. This Chapter mainly explains her contribution to (i) Pre-Primary education, (ii) Primary and Elementary Education, (iii) Education of Women, its importance and essentials as embodied in her plan of Women's Education, (iv) Rural education: emphasis on the rural environment; influence on Radhakrishnan University Commission's recommendations, (v) Higher Secondary Education: emphasis on diversification of courses: influence on the Mudaliar Commission, (vi) Education of Fine Arts: importance of reviving the traditions of Ancient Indian Art: importance on Kalakishetra founded in Madras by Rukumini Devi (vii) Technical Education, (viii) Teacher Education and (ix) Social Education.

Chapter VIII entitled: "Final Assessment of Mrs. Annie Besant's work as an educational thinker".

In this Chapter I have attempted an assessment of Annie Besant as an educational thinker. A brief discussion about her chief contributions with a comparison with the master educationists like Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Dewey, etc., has been made, and a criticism by her biographers have been given also, so as to provide an estimate of her philosophy and education.



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P R E F A C E

The title of this work is self-explanatory as it deals exclusively with the educational thought of Annie Besant in Indian setting. The chief aim here is to provide a systematic explanation of Annie Besant's educational views. The emphasis throughout this work is expositive rather than critical. As her published works were obsolete and soon forgotten, therefore, the author has tried to expose and unearth the important facts of her life for explicit presentation. In order to avoid many controversies and to give clarity throughout this work, the ideas of Annie Besant have been expressed in her own words. Her bitterances on various philosophical, and educational topics have been collected from her works and put together in an attempt to let Annie Besant speak herself on her philosophy.

Due to Annie Besant's differences on political issues with the congress leaders of her time, and especially with Tilak and Gandhiji, on the working of the Home Rule Movement and other cognate matters, the name of Annie Besant has remained shrouded totally into oblivion. Even after independence when the pre-Gandhian congress-government was formed in India, Annie Besant was branded as an anti-national British spy, and it is hard to find a slight mention of her works during this period. When one finds scores of studies conducted on Gandhiji

or on Tagore or on any other social thinker of India. He will fail to find any solid work worth mentioning on Annie Besant, through she lived and worked incessantly and died after working for the educational, social, and political emancipation of India. In the first and second decades of the twentieth century when even Gandhiji's name was yet unknown in India, Annie Besant's was known in educational and political circle of Indian life.

Now as the phenomenal and dazzling charm of the old congress regime is declining very fast, and the critical outlook has begun to prevail upon the national biographers, and the national history of modern India is being re-written in the light of preserved records; and factual data, the available unprejudiced reports on the national freedom movements have critically thrashed out the state papers and other public documents, the name of Annie Besant has again emerged into lime light, and her herculean role in building up the modern free India has begun to receive a proper appraisal from unbiased historian and scholars who have come to estimate her as the real prophet of Indian nationalism and social life.

Annie Besant was in reality, a precession in one person as she casted her nets very wide touching the social, religion, educational political and philosophical fields; as she always limited her description of these fields to only one nation -- India, because she considered India to be her pasts, present

and future motherland. After the death Annie Besant left a valuable heritage in the form of books, tracts, lectures, pamphlets and articles which cover a variety of subjects providing a definite message to India and to the whole world. As she has remained a neglected subject of study upto now, her copious works, which are rarely available in any public library, can provide an extensive sphere to scholars, to explore her valuable and thought-provoking contributions in different perspectives. With these intentions, the author has undertaken this study.

But the way, to work on the proposed topic was not smooth, it was frosted with difficulties, as I found that the books of Annie Besant were out of print and most of them were not published second time. I had no idea as to how this work would proceed but my all over India Survey, regarding the exploration of her work, as partly financed by the university of Jammu and Kashmir and partly by the U.G.C., facilitated a thorough study of her literature spread in different libraries of India. This led to rely upon available materials alone and interviews taken with a small number of living old associates of Annie Besant.

I wish to express my gratitude to the staff of the library of Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, Varanasi and most of all, the Library of the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society Adyar, Madras and elsewhere in

India, for kind and fruitful co-operation and help. I am, also thankful, to the following individuals for their valuable suggestions in various ways regarding this work.

At Adyar: N.Yagneswara Sastry; Norma Y.Sastry; Siitae Devi Peterson; G.V.Subba Rao, Seetha Neelakantan; Pm.Ramchandran.

In Madras: Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar; Rukmani Devi Arundal K.Sankara Menon, Raj Kumar, Mrs. Trilokekar; Miss G.Sundri.

In Varanasi: Rohit Mehta; I.N. Gurta; Badri Prasad; Miss I.S. Morris and above all a grateful acknowledgement of debt is made to Miss S.Telang, Principal Vasanta Degree College for women, Varanasi, who very graciously lent me more than two hundred important rare works of Annie Besant from her family library which greatly helped me in this compilation.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Prof. Habibul Rahman, ex-Head of the Department of Education, under whose able guidance, the synopsis of this work was framed. In the course of my study, the one whose memory constantly recurs to my mind is that of late Dr.A.Mujib, the then Head of the Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University. He supervised my work till his sudden and untimely death in January 1970. My gratefulness to him is more than I can express in words.

But above all I am thankful to Miss Safia Sultana, Reader in Education, who very kindly supervised my work after the death of Dr. A.Mujib, who gave me generously her valuable time, read the whole of the Mss with minute care and suggested to me many valuable clarifications of thought and expression. She is thus in a way responsible for this work having been completed.

Narhari Krishan Vaid

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C H A P T E R - I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

In this introductory chapter we shall not attempt to present the educational philosophy and experiments of Annie Besant; but here we shall enter upon a general survey of the historical background of the Indian scene of the early and middle half of the nineteenth century in order to explain the British educational policy of that time, its imposition on indigenous system of education and also the educational reform movements worked out by the early pioneers.

When Annie Besant arrived in India in 1893 she saw the structure of the age-old village society very fastly crumbling down and the ideals and values of Indian education being fully destroyed through the British educational policy. She studied the Indian situation by making tours of whole of India and planned systematically to work for the cause of Indian national education. Therefore, before we take up Annie Besant's theory and system of education, it would be worthwhile to understand fully the historical background which served as the basis of Annie Besant's educational pursuits.

The present chapter will be divided, for convenience into two parts. In the first part the discussion will be

done on the British Educational policy and its imposition on indigenous system of education and consequent destruction of the ideals and values of ancient Indian education. In the second part the educational reform movements will be discussed covering the movements of Bengal and Bombay in details.

I

Macaulay's famous Minute of 1835 and Wood's Despatch of 1852 brought turning points in the history of Indian education.

(a) Macaulay's Minute: When Macaulay came to India, William Bentinck was the Governor General in Council. Bentinck was a simple man having both moral and intellectual clarity in him. Being a close friend of Jermy Bentham he had a utilitarian faith in education. He advocated British language as the key to all improvement and wished to introduce it for the regeneration of India.¹

Before Macaulay's arrival in India Bentinck had already formulated his plan for laying the foundation of English system of education. He watched carefully the indications of the opportunity, when Hindus may start learning English and he may use his power firmly in moulding the process.

1. Majumdar, R.C. (General Editor): 'British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance', Part II, p.45.

When Macaulay appeared on the Indian scene, a great controversy was going on between the "Orientalists" and "Anglicists". The Orientalists argued "that Indians could never master the English language, that an imposition of the English language would result in resentment. This was not true. Indians were giving increasing evidence of their ability to master English language and a group of Indians led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy had already submitted a memorial to the Governor General on 11th December 1823 urging the government to abandon the proposal for establishing a Sanskrit College at Calcutta and requested to "promote a moral liberal and enlightened system of instruction; embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus".¹ This memorial gives a clear evidence that there was a desire for English education among Indians.

Macaulay soon understood Bentinck's mind and the flow of the tide going on in India in favour of English education. Macaulay had come to India with preconceived ideas about the people of India and their culture.

On his arrival in India on June 10, 1834 Macaulay

1. Sharp, W.H.; "Selections from Educational Records", Vol. I, p. 101.

was appointed immediately as the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. This Committee was divided on the question of its educational policy particularly in regard to the medium of instruction. Out of the ten members, five supported the policy of giving encouragement to Oriental literature and were known as the Oriental party and rest were in favour of the adoption of English as a medium of instruction and were known as the English party".¹ The leader of the Oriental party was H. T. Prinsep who was then the Secretary to Government of Bengal in the Education Department and the leader of the English party was Macaulay himself who besides being the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction, was also the Law Member of the Executive Council of the Governor General.

Macaulay declined to take any active part in the controversy, between "Orientalists" and "Anglicists" taking place at the meetings of the General Committee of Public Instruction because he knew that the matter would be placed before him for opinion, he being also the Law Member. It must be borne in mind that "Macaulay was not asked to define a complete educational policy of the whole country, but was merely asked in his capacity as the Law Member

1. Nurullah and Naik: op.cit., p. 131

to give his legal opinion on how a limited sum of ten lakhs of rupees could best be utilized for educational purposes and whether the educational clause¹ (43) of the charter Act of 1813 prohibited the use of the grant of any purpose other than the encouragement of Oriental learning".²

Macaulay was waiting for the occasion when he would be asked for his opinion. He had already decided a detailed justification in his mind which resulted into a famous Minute regarding the new educational policy, dated 2nd February, 1835 and was written by him "using his legal acumen, forensic skill and his masterly style".³

The main thesis of the omniscient Minute was that all the learning of the East was nothing besides the metaphysics of Locke and physics of Newton, and that it was only the torch of western learning that could illumine the Indian mind shrouded in ignorance and superstitions. Macaulay wrote that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India

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1. 43rd Section of the Charter Act of 1813 reads as under:
"It shall be lawful for the Governor-General in Council to direct that..... a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India....." noted by Nurullah and Naik, op.cit., pp.81-82.
 2. Mukerji, S.N: "History of Education India", p.80
 3. Basu: Op.cit., p.31 footnotes.

and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature has been admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education..."¹

Macaulay's passed his Minute on to Bentinck along with the threat of resignation.

Bentinck forwarded Macaulay's Omniscient Minute to H.N.Prinsep, the leader of the Orientalists for recording his opinion. Prinsep expressed his views through a note, dated the 15th February, 1835, where he argued that the clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 had a particular reference to Indian literature and to eminent native Oriental scholar alone. Prinsep further opined that it would be injudicious to withdraw those endowments, which had already been sanctioned for the promotion of Arabic and Sanskrit learning. But the arguments of Prinsep carried no weight with Bentinck and he approved of Macaulay's Minute and recorded on it "I give my entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in this Minute"²

In a Resolution of 7th March, 1835, Bentinck passed the following order:

"First - His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among

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1. Young, G.M: "Speeches by Lord Macaulay with his Minute on Indian Education", p. 349.
 2. Mukerji, S.N.: Op.Cit. p.82, Here the note of Prinsep on Macaulay's Minute as edited by Sharp, p.117.

the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriate for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.

Second - But it is not the intention of His Lordship in Council to abolish any college or school of native learning, while the native population shall appear to be inclined to avail themselves of the advantages which it affords.....that all the existing professors and students at all the institutions under the superintendence of the committee shall continue to receive their stipends..

Third - That large sum has been expended by the committee on the printing of Oriental works; his Lordship -in-Council directs that no portion of the funds shall hereafter be so employed.

Fourth - His Lordship-in-Council directs that all the funds which these reforms will leave at the disposal of the Committee be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language".¹

This passed resolution marked a significant turning point in the history of English education in India. In this resolution, writes Mukerji "the aims and type of education were defined; the promotion of western arts and sciences were acknowledged as the avowed object; the printing of Oriental works, and grants or stipends to students of Oriental institutions were to be stopped in future, but schools of Oriental learning were to be maintained".²

1. Nurullah & Naik: Op.Cit., p.139

2. S.N.Mukerji: Op.Cit., p.83.

Critical Observation of Macaulay's Minute:

Many charges have been levelled against Macaulay and his historical Minute. Some critics held Macaulay responsible for introducing Western education in India through the medium of English. But Macaulay "was not the originator of the system, he merely took the tide of popular opinion at its flood that had been running high through the spade work done by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his colleagues and the Christian missionaries in favour of westernization of education".¹ When Macaulay came to India, already in Bombay and Bengal, the demand for instruction in English was growing very rapidly and "English books were sold by thousands and there was practically no demand for Sanskrit or Arabic books".²

Macaulay understood the tide and drafted his remarkable Minute. Moreover, it must be noted that Government was also eager to introduce English education in order to get English - educated Indian servants and to use English language as the connecting link between the rulers and the ruled.

Macaulay was correct in his conviction that "the virile civilization of the West was necessary for rejuvenating Indian culture".³ But his recommendation about the

1. Ibid, pp.84-85.

2. Radhakrishnan S, (Chairman): "The Report of the University Education Commission", Vol. I, p. 11.

3. S. N. Mukerji: Op. cit., p. 86.

use of English as the only medium of instruction cannot be justified. Macaulay must not have totally rejected the languages of India as useless and unsuitable medium of instruction for teaching scientific or literary ideas. Macaulay's remarks that "A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia"¹, was only a ridiculous statement revealing him as a British snob at his worst. In reality the ideas expressed by him were not the result of his stay in India. He had already formed his opinion long before he arrived in India.

Macaulay was also wrong when he believed that English education would completely anglicize Indians. In a letter written on October 12, 1836, to his father Macaulay wrote: "Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully.....The effect of this education on the Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy; but many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolator among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any efforts to proselytize; without the smallest interference with religious liberty; merely

1. Young, G.M.: Op.Cit., p.349.

by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the prospect".² Macaulay did not know that Hinduism had a great power of assimilation so it was not possible to find easy way of conversion through English education.

The Filtration Theory of Macaulay also deserves a postmortem. He believed that "Education was to permeate the masses from above. Drop by drop from the Himalayas of Indian life useful information was to trickle downwards, forming in time a broad and stately stream to irrigate the thirsty plains".² But this Filtration theory proved to be a mere mirage because it created a separate class of English knowing scholars who had no sympathy with their countrymen. Macaulay wrote in his Minute: "We must.....do our best to form a class who may be....a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect".³

Thus Macaulay's Minute, though full of grave defects, proved a very important document because its influence can still be felt, even after independence. India's political unity but mass education remained neglected and confined to a small section of people. Mayhew was right when, explaining the total results of Macaulay's Minute, he wrote:

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1. Trevelyan, George Otto: "The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay", pp.329-30.
 2. Mayhew, A: "The Education of India", p.16.
 3. Young, G.M.: Op.Cit., p.259.

"the seed sown in 1835 has produced a crop in some respects far richer, and in others far poorer, than that expected by the sowers and that the soil has yielded to their treatment fruits for which they would be anxious to disclaim all responsibility".¹

(b) Wood's Despatch:

By 1853 a stage had been reached when a detailed survey of the whole field of education in India had become very essential. Nurullah and Naik write: "Since the charter Act of 1813, several educational experiments had been tried; a number of agencies had been at work, in their own ways, to spread education among the people".² On the basis of a thorough enquiry, by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, into the educational development in India, the Court of Directors sent down their greatest Educational Despatch on 19th July 1854. This document was written at the instance of Charles Wood who was then the President of the Board of Control, so this Despatch is known after his name as Wood's Education Despatch, considered by James to be the "Magna Charta of English Education in India".

Mukerji writes: "This famous document is attributed to the pen of Mr. John Stuart Mill, the well-known English thinker, who was a mere clerk in the India office at that time. Some say that it was perhaps written by Lord Northbrook"³. Whatever it may be but the reality is that

1. Mayhew: Op.Cit., pp.22-23.

2. Nurullah and Naik, Op.Cit., p.203.

3. Mukerji, S.N: "A Cultural History of India", p.128.

though this document was written more than a century ago, it appears quite modern even at present:

Wood's Despatch was a long document of a hundred paragraphs and dealt with many questions of great educational importance. This celebrated Despatch contains in, Lord Dalhousie's words "a scheme of education for all India, far wider and more comprehensive than the local or the supreme Government (in India) could have ventured to suggest"¹. This Despatch was a symmetrical design, leading up from graded vernacular village schools, through Anglo-vernacular schools and high schools, to college and universities. It suffered a little from this very symmetry, for it left no room for a self-contained scheme of Secondary Education. This Despatch also brought the old indigenous schools into a system of grant-in-aid and government inspection.

The Despatch "enunciated the aim of education as the diffusion of the Arts, Science, Philosophy and Literature of Europe. It laid down that the study of Indian languages should be taught, wherever there was a demand for it, and that both the English Language and the Indian languages were to be regarded as the media for the diffusion of European knowledge."²

This Despatch recommended the following measures:-

1. "The constitution of a separate department of the administration for education.

1. Ali, A. Yusuf: "A Cultural History of India", p. 128
2. The Report of the University Education Commission, 1948-49, Vol. I, p. 17.

2. The institution of universities at Presidency towns;
3. The establishment of institutions for training teachers for all classes of schools;
4. The maintenance of the existing Government colleges and High Schools and the increase of their number when necessary;
5. The establishment of new Middle schools;
6. Increased attention to Vernacular Schools, indigenous or others, for elementary education; and
7. The introduction of a system of grants-in-aid".¹

The Despatch was the first authoritative declaration on the part of the British Parliament about the educational policy to be followed in India. The scheme of education given by the Despatch was ambitious, rather comprehensive in its nature that Indian educationists have not yet succeeded in fulfilling the tasks which it had set. It recognized but partially, the value of Indian culture, and at the same time it showed the need for implanting European knowledge on it. The Despatch also condemned the Filtration Theory of Macaulay and suggested several measures for spreading mass education and also preserving and encouraging indigenous education and thus provided enough opportunities to a child to get good education, right from the primary to the University stage.

1. Majumdar, R.C. (General Editor): Op.Cit., p.50.

Though the Despatch possess many praise-worthy points, yet it is also responsible for some glaring defects of the present educational system of this country:-

- (a) It introduced a new educational system based on a chain-work of schools, colleges and examinations under the ultimate control of the State. With the revival of national consciousness, the government schools did not change according to the needs. Such a policy aroused suspicion among the people about the educational intentions of the government.
- (b) The State system of education completely ignored religion and thus put a cruel blow to ancient ideals of Indian education. This fact must not be ignored that the Despatch was a product of a materialistic age and thus it had no spiritual consideration.
- (c) Indian Universities, established in Presidency towns, were Indian in name but western in essence. These universities were transplanted to India with root, branch and foliage all complete in one day, and have not grown with the growth of the nation... It was also completely forgotten that a university develops spontaneously and is never an outcome of a State order".¹

But on the whole the Despatch did organize the present

1. Mukerji, S.N: Op.cit., p.136.

Indian educational system and brought a systematic order out of misdirected efforts. The sincerity of the wishes of the author of Despatch can never be challenged and the Despatch is important for what is observed and planned than for what it omitted. But the pity is that the Indian government did not act fully upon the suggestions and recommendations of the Despatch and some glaring defects of the present educational system arose from the partial or total omission of many instructions of the Despatch.

(c) The Imposition of British Educational Policy on Indigenous System of Education and Consequent Destruction of the Ideals and Values of Ancient INDIAN Education:

It would be better if we explain first the nature of indigenous system of education as it existed before the imposition of British educational policy, in this way we will understand in detail how Britishers influenced the indigenous education system of India.

Before the imposition of the British educational system "in the background there was a wide spread and fairly well-organized system of indigenous education, which had continued intact down to the eighteenth century and the remnants of which can be seen even today in centres of traditional learning and obscure books of the country. It was, in fact, a well-developed national system consisting of both higher and elementary institutions. These institutions had been in existence from time immemorial

and they had been woven into the texture of the social and cultural life of the people. These were the inheritors and custodians of the intellectual and cultural traditions of the people, and in their own way they tried to fulfill their social obligations".¹

Indigenous educational institutions were of two main types - elementary schools, and schools for higher learning. These two types of education existed quite independent of each other. Those, who aspired to receive higher education, generally did not attend common elementary schools. It is estimated that roughly for 10 boys in elementary schools, there were 6 in higher schools. A fairly extensive system of domestic education was also prevalent in the country. Most of the children from rich families who aspired to higher learning used to receive elementary education at home".²

Elementary Education:

The Elementary education was quite extensive and was intended for the masses. It was primarily for boys and not for girls. Though education was extensive, the standard was low, and The common school were single - teacher institutions, where many teachers were inefficient, methods of teaching were obsolete, text-books were unsuitable, discipline was slack but punishment was severe,

1. Basu, A. N. : Op. cit. , p. 2

2. Farnlekar, R. V. : "A Source-Book of History of Education", p. XII.

hours of attendance were irregular and holidays were numerous. Most of the schools were without special buildings of their own.

The elementary system was widespread consisting of numerous primary schools scattered all over the countryside. Practically every village had its primary school, its Pathshala. In Bengal alone, according to Adam¹, there were about the 1835 a hundred thousand such Pathshalas. Pathshalas gave instructions of 3 R's and were singularly free from any direct religious teaching. In those no one demanded religious teaching of the village Pathshalas because the parents had unconsciously realized that the school was not the place for religious instruction; for by living in a social environment where religion was a predominating influence, children imbibed the religious ideas and ideals of their parents naturally and without any effort. Moreover all castes and creeds were represented in the school population, and the teacher did not necessarily and always belong to a caste which would entitle him to teach religion to his pupils, more so the pupils in these Pathshalas came from middle and also from the lower classes of society (who were regarded untouchables) thus it was not possible to impart religious instruction.

The teaching in the Pathshala ended at the last stage in training the pupils in advanced accounts, in writing petitions, and business letters, and the like.

1. Adam's Report - Calcutta Edition, pp.6-7,

This system of instruction lacked in breadth of vision. But the elementary system had also some good points in it. Teaching was in close touch with the life outside, general education was designed for all, but specialization was meant for the intelligent minority. Due to the small size of the school, individual attention was provided by the teacher. In praising this system Adam remarked, "My recollection of the village schools of Scotland do not enable me to pronounce that the instruction given in them has a more direct bearing upon the daily interests of life than that which I find given or professed to be given, in the humbler village schools of Bengal".¹

The elementary school of the Muslims was generally known as the Maktab, Quran School or the Persian school where the distinct need of the students was to acquire an ability to read the Quran written in Arabic. Most of the Muslim children attended the Maktaba, but where Maktaba were not available, they used to attend Hindu schools. Persian, being the court language, was the medium of instruction in Muslim schools though Hindu pupils were also attending in a large number.

Higher Education:

The institutions of Hindus for higher education were the Tols and for Muslims the Madrasahs, which were responsible for the education of the intellectual elite of the country, the Brahmin Pandits and Muslim Moulvis.

1. Basu, A.N. (editor): Adam's Reports, p.146.

Such Tols and Madrassahs could be found in all important centres of cultural life. In the north Naddwip, Mithila and Benares were famous for their Tols to which pupils come from all parts of India. In the south similar institutions existed and some of them were associated with temples and monasteries. Madrassahs were situated in important seats of political power and in Muslim religious centres such as Delhi, Agra, Patna, Murshidabad, Bijapur, Jaunpur and other cities. Persian, being the official language so many Hindu students joined the Madrassahs and studied Persian and Arabic. "In these Tols and Madrassahs a traditional classical curriculum was taught through the medium of the classical language of the people - through Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. The curriculum was based on the culture of the people and was closely related to their religion".¹

The standard of work done in these seminaries of higher learning was of a very high order. Some men who were teachers in these institutions had obtained great popularity and eminence in such special studies as grammar, logic, law, rhetoric, metaphysics, theology, literature,

1. Basu, A.N: "Education in Modern India", p.3. It must be understood that though religion occupies an important place in the curriculum, it was by means the only subject of study. In the curriculum there was provision for the study of secular subjects like Astronomy, Medicine. According to Ward, these centres of learning were of five types specialising in one of the branches of learning, viz., (1) logic, (2) Law, (3) General Literature, (4) Astronomy and (5) Grammar.

jurisprudence and science and that scholarship could only be compared to the best classical scholars of all times.

After the advent of the British a new India grew up. The whole of the country was transformed politically, economically and to a great extent socially. The previously existed traditional system were made to change and take shapes in such a way as to adjust according to the needs of the time and situations.

In India education had always been held in high esteem. Thomas wrote: "Education is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence".¹ But in a country where the political and social system had fallen into a chaotic condition, age-old indigenous education could not be expected to flourish. Indigenous education in India had always been of a classical and spiritual rather than of a practical nature. It was communicated through the sacred classical languages of the Hindus and the Muslims, namely Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. In the curriculum very little science was taught. While the Indian writers had been prolific in their production of philosophic and literary works, they had paid little regard to the development of science.

1. Thomas, F.W: "History and Prospect of British Education in India", p.1.

The imposition of the British educational policy during the first half of the nineteenth century made possible the introduction of the English language through the schools which were shaped after the English system of education and the gradual decay of the indigenous languages and learning. Though Moria, Elphinstone and Munro tried their best to partonize the cause of Vernaculars and the elementary education of the masses yet the accepted policy of the government to create through English studies "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect"¹, had made the best intellectuals of India like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others to realize the futility of pursuing a system of exclusively classical education and the great possibilities which a knowledge of the language and literature of the West afforded for the cultural and economic progress of the people. Hence they were anxious for the diffusion of European Education and English language among the countrymen.

The indigenous system was fast going into decay owing to various economic, and political reasons, chief among which were the growing poverty of the people and the withdrawal of patronage which followed the change of Government. This decay in the indigenous system has been ascribed,

1. Young, G.M: "Speeches By Lord Macaulay with His Minute On Indian Education", p.359.

in the twenties of the last century, by the Collector of Bellary "to the competition of foreign goods, the movement of troops, and the substitution of European for native rule which despite a less vigorous enforcement of the revenue, had impoverished the country".¹

These forces were, no doubt, also responsible for the conservative character of the indigenous education. Prof. Basu is correct in his assessment when he says "In reaction to external forces which it could not control, the indigenous system became more and more conservative and rigid, and it lacked the progressiveness which is the sign of a growing system. Meanwhile times were fast changing; but the old system could neither keep pace with the changes nor adapt itself to the new circumstances".²

In 1823 the General Committee of Public Instruction was set up and was asked to give shape to the educational policy of the government and this committee made its principle that "as the funds at the disposal of the Committee were quite inadequate, it would be best to apply the funds to the higher education of the upper classes",³ which very sincerely hampered the general elementary education of the masses. Consequently the indigenous institutions were neglected and with them the education of the masses was

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1. Campbell, A.D: Report dated Bellary, August 17, 1823, given in Indian Education in Parliamentary Paper, Part I, by A.N. Basu, p. 181.
 2. Basu, A.N: "Education in Modern India", p. 13.
 3. Ibid, p. 27.

also completely neglected. The forces which were responsible for the adoption of Macaulay's and Wood's "policy had by that time gathered so much momentum that any counter-movement, however much it might succeed for the time being, was destined to fail ultimately and, as history proved, it did fail"¹, and so also failed the indigenous system of education in competing with the English system of education.

Many of the defects of the British educational policy can be traced to the early neglect of the indigenous system. Prof. Basu writes "when the Government ignored the net work of the old indigenous institutions spread all over the countryside, it placed at once the first and foremost barrier in the path of educational progress. That barrier has not been removed to this day. It is true that later on attempts were made from time to time to incorporate the remnants of the old system had already become very much worn out and had lost much of its vitality. And as time passed the task of revitalising these Pathshalas (which never died out completely and which continued to exist in a moribound condition) and incorporating them into the new system became more and more difficult. As a result the very instruments which might have helped greatly in spreading mass education now stand in the way as its great impediment"². To reorganize or revitalize the old Pathshala is

1. Ibid, p.27.

2. Ibid, pp.35-36.

one of the biggest educational problems of today.

The indigenous institutions were transmitting the age-old preserved ideals and values of ancient Indian education but with the imposition of British educational policy those old values and ideals, which were necessary to weave the life of the Indian society into the complex whole, were fully destroyed.

The ancient Indian education imbibed many high ideals in the pupils - "infusion of Piety and Religiousness, formation of character, development of personality, inculcation of civic and social duties, promotion of social efficiency and preservation and spread of national culture."¹

These ideals remained in vogue in India in bygone ages. Many traces and relics of these ancient systems are still to be found in India. But the progress and spread of education on western lines has curtailed their activity to a very large extent, and tends more and more to limit the spheres within which they are operative. No western country, not even Britain, have had systems of education which have had such a long and continuous history with so few modifications as some of the educational systems of India. The long centuries through which they held sway show that they must have possessed elements which were of value, and that they were not unguited to the needs of those who developed and adopted them. They produced many great men and earnest seekers after truth, and their output on the intellectual

1. Annie Besant: "Shall India Live or Die"? p.52.

side is by no means unremarkable. The educational ideals and values developed by them, are considered as valuable contribution to educational thought and practice. But the ideals and values were fully destroyed when that momentous change began, which was brought about by the introduction of western education and learning. The ancient Indian education preserved by the "Pathshalas" and "Tols" had become stereotyped and formal and unable to meet the needs of British education system. Annie Besant is correct when she says: "When the company destroyed the immemorial village system, and with it the literacy of the masses"¹ was also destroyed.

II

The beginning of the nineteenth century ushers into a new era in Indian history. When Britishers made a political consolidation of India, they tried to influence other aspects of Indian life, particularly education. The indigenous system of education was considerably eclipsed by the new type of English institutions. The study of vernaculars were gradually driven into the shade and English had attained the main place among the subjects of study. Elementary mass education was totally neglected and higher education at the secondary school stage and university education for

1. Annie Besant: "Shall India Live or Die?" p.52.

the intellectual advancement for the upper classes of society received total encouragement. In India the shadow of illiteracy gradually deepened and an ever-widening gulf was created between English educated upper classes and the vast illiterate masses of people. In short there arose two sections in the country, one who looked towards British education as a panacea for the social ills of Indian society, and the others to whom English education seemed a sort of slow poisoning which would enslave the mind and social life of the people.

That time, when Britishers were implementing their educational policy, a transition in the social and cultural history of India was taking place. The impact of European civilization was becoming manifest in various ways, proclaiming the opening of a new chapter in Indian history. Factories were making their appearances around Calcutta. New buildings were constructed in the latest designs of architecture and new roads were built in the vicinity of Calcutta and Bombay. The railways had been introduced and were spreading rapidly. A section of population was rapidly growing up highly European in dress, manners and attitudes of life, sharply distinguished from the rest. Old values and traditions were challenged and even flouted and a spirit of open revolt against ancient beliefs and customs characterized the intellectual and progressive classes. Movements for momentous social and educational

reform, pioneered by Raja Ram Mohan Roy were rapidly gaining ground. Brahmo Samaj movement started a campaign in favour of education. Ishvara Chandra Vidya Sagar, Keshab Chander Sen and Devendra Nath Tagore reoriented the Brahmo Samaj and their policy towards education. In Bombay reform movement by Hindus and Parsies made a headway progress in advancing the cause of education of the people. And thus an era of educational progress dawned which can be called as the era of Indian renaissance.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy:

In 1815 a new factor entered into the field of educational development. A certain section of educated and liberally-minded Indians, through their long attachments with the Europeans in Calcutta had acknowledged without embarrassment the virtues of Western learning, social institutions and the Western social ethics. Of these, the most prominent was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a retired revenue officer of the East India Company.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, known as the father of Indian renaissance, remained prepared for whole of his life to challenge old, obscurantist orthodoxies with courage. The Raja was a great scholar of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and English. The Raja was the first Hindu to break through the barrier between the ancient East and the Modern West. He advocated that India adopt European intellectual achievements in order to further its own development. His

numerous activities had but one objective, to arouse India's spirit and to free it from the deadening stupor of mediavalism. Through Raja's influence European thought and social standards began to penetrate, to a great extent, the circles of the elite Hindus.

The Raja devoted himself to the study of the different languages of Asia and Europe and the Scriptures of different religious systems, in order to discover the "True Religion".¹ These studies, with his close connection with Europeans and especially the Missionaries ultimately led to his severance from the orthodox fold and made him to devote himself to the preaching of Vedic Monotheism. He was thus admirably suited to act as the intermediary between the advanced sections of Indians and Europeans who solicitous of the well-being of Indians. This section of the Europeans of Calcutta was led by David Hare, a watch-maker by profession, who had come to India in 1800 and took upon himself the task of disseminating education among the people of Bengal. Ram Mohan Roy and David Hare became good friends and in collaboration they drew up a plan for an English institution at Calcutta in 1815. The Raja had at first wanted it to be a seminary for teaching the doctrines of Vedic Monotheism, but the better sense of David Hare, for establishing an English school, prevailed and Ram Mohan Roy gladly accepted the plan. Heimsath is

correct when he makes an estimate of the Raja important role in Indian history, he writes "Ram Mohun Roy's contributions to the making of modern India lay not only in his iconoclasm and in his intellectual evocation of the new era, but also in his practical work, to re-establish the natural texture of society.....For Roy, English education was the portal opening the way to Indians to advance toward equality with Westerners, and he provided critical support for private and governmental efforts to introduce higher education along Europeans lines".¹

Raja was very keen in proving English Education to the young men of his country. In 1816 the Raja offered a piece of ground to Enstace Carey of Serampore for building a school house, but the scheme was never materialized. Soon after, in 1817 he established an English school at Suripara, for free instruction of Hindu boys. It soon had about 200 pupils on roll and the expenses were defrayed by Raja Ram Mohan himself. Shortly after, he opened an English class at his own house under the charge of Moncroft and transferred the most distinguished students of the school to it.² In 1822 Raja opened his school on a large scale on premises near Cornwallis Square and named it the Anglo-Hindu School. It was a free institution

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1. Heimsath, Charles H: "Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform", p.12.
 2. Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, XVI, Part II, pp.160-61. (conversation with Ram Rattan Mookerjee, 9th June, 1950).

supported entirely by Ram Mohan Roy. "William Adam strongly desired to make it a public institution to solicit for public subscription, and to put it under the control of the Unitarian Committee, but Ram Mohun firmly refused his consent to the scheme".¹

When under the Lord Minto's Minute it had been contemplated to strengthen the Calcutta Madrasah and the Benaras Sanskrit College, and to establish new orientalist colleges at Delhi and Agra, Ram Mohan Roy protested to it in a letter written to the Governor General. The Raja wrote: "This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to lead the minds of the youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or the society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India".² Ram Mohan Roy points out at length how the young students of this seminary would merely waste a dozen years of the most valuable period of their lives by acquiring the niceties of Sanskrit grammar, speculative philosophy of Vedanta, obsolete interpretations of Vedic passages in Mimamsa, and the subtleties of

1. "The English Works of Raja Ram Mohun Roy", p.472.

2. Ibid, p.474.

the Nyaya Sastra.

The Raja then continues: "In order to enable your Lordship to appreciate the utility of encouraging such imaginary learning as above characterized, I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lrd Bacon with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote.

"If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote or more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus".¹

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's letter was delivered to the

1. Ibid, p.474.

Governor General and remained unanswered, yet it played a decisive role later in determining the Government's policy.

The Raja looked to education to bring about a receptive atmosphere to new ideas. He wrote text-books in Bengali, and a suggestive Bengali grammar. He established and conducted two native newspapers, the Sambad Kanmudi in Bengali and the Mirat-al-Akbar in Persian and made them the means of diffusing much useful social information. Ram Mohan Roy extended his generous support to all movements and organizations which had even a remote bearing on education.

Writing about Raja Ram Mohan Roy's work for education, Natarajan says "It was his inspiration that started the move for the Hindu College, though he had to withdraw from it because of the antipathy of interested Hindus. And it was his active support which enabled Dr. Alexander Duff to carry on despite the opposition that faced him on his arrival in India. Ram Mohun allowed him the use of his old Brahmo building, brought him students and even attended his religious classes in order to win over critics or silence them.....Ram Mohun maintained an English school in Calcutta from 1817, the Vedanta College for Sanskrit studies from 1826 and personally conducted....journals for the diffusion of scientific, historical, literary and political knowledge".¹

1. Natarajan, S: "A Century of Social Reform in India", p.39.

Though Ram Mohan Roy was a sincere admirer of the 'New Learning from the West' he was never dazzled by it. He upheld the cause of personality against Mechanism. He insisted on releasing the vital urge of human nature from the barrier of intellectualism. He was all for regulating life on the principles of Humanity.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahmo Samaj Movement:

Raja Ram Mohan was the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, a Theistic Church of India. The Raja though a devout idolator in boyhood, he early began to doubt and speculate, and at fifteen left home to study Buddhism at Tibet. After some years travel he returned, by his anti-idolatrous sentiments made him to leave home again, to live at Benaras for the study of Hinduism upto 1803.

When Ram Mohan was serving the East India Company as Dewan for collecting Revenues, he first began to assemble his friends together for evening discussions on the absurdities of idolatry and he also issued his first work, Tuhfatul-Muwahhiddin (A gift to Monotheists). This treatise was in Persian, with an Arabic preface, and was a bold protest against superstition and priest-craft. These proceedings brought on him much hostility and even persecution and in 1814 he retired to Calcutta for safety.

At Calcutta Ram Mohan soon established a little friendly Society, Atmiya Sabha, which met weekly to read

the Hindu Scriptures and to chant Monotheistic hymns. In 1816 the Raja translated the Vedanta into Bengali and Hindustani, following this by a series of translations from the Upanishads into Bengali, Hindustani and English, with introductions and comments of his own. These works he published at his own cost and disseminated widely among his countrymen. His writings excited much opposition and gave rise to numerous controversies, but the deadliest blow he inflicted upon Hindu superstition was his effective agitation against the rite of Suttee.

Ram Mohan Roy, on the basis of his Atmiya Sabha, felt able to re-embdoy his cherished ideal of opening a Brahma Association (Brahmo Samaj) at a hired house, on August 20, 1828. A suitable church-building was then erected and placed in the hands of trustees, with a small endowments and a remarkable trustdeed by which the building was set apart "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, unsearchable and Imutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe"¹. The new church was formally opened on January 23, 1830, from which day the Brahmo Samaj dates its existence.

The Brahmo Samaj gave to the Bengali society " a satisfying formula for introducing certain Western ideas and ways of life into their personal lives".² Ram Mohan Roy's

1. "The English Works of Raja Ram Mohun Roy", p.xi.

2. Heimsath, Charles H: Op.cit.p.73.

Brahmo Samaj was, in reality, an institutional form of his formula, having monotheistic character "to teach and to practice the worship of the One, supreme, undivided eternal God".¹

Ram Mohan Roy had a full knowledge of christianity and for understanding Bible and reading it in its original form, he had learned Hebrew and Greek. So this was the reason that Brahmo Samaj's "teachings and particularly its ethical² tenets resembled Christian doctrines. The Samaj rejected the Brahmin priesthood's intermediation between man and God; repudiated idolatry and sacrifices for its public services; ignored caste distinctions; and adopted a congregational form of worship similar to that of the Unitarians. At various times, particularly in educational endeavours, Roy worked closely with Christian missionaries in Bengal. Nevertheless, he believed that all fundamental religious truths could be found in Hindu scriptures, particularly in the Upanishads, that conviction, in addition to the dogmatism he found among many christians, kept him from conversion to Christianity. His announced purpose was to restore the Hindu faith to its original purity".³

The Brahmo Samaj was a religious body and the involvement of its adherents in the task of social reform was a secondary purpose of it. Ram Mohan Roy, through

1. Ibid, p.74.

2. In a letter to John Digby, the Raja wrote "I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge", Roy's English works, pp.928-29.

3. Heimsath, Charles H: Op.cit. p.74.

his broad vision about man and society, wanted to combine in his thought and in his social career the advocacy of religious, social, educational and political reforms.

After Ram Mohan Roy's death in 1833 the leadership of the Samaj fell in the hands of Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagish, one of the Raja's devout followers. But Samaj being in the infant stages, was weak and unpopular, barely managed to survive because of the generous patronage of the wealthy Dwarkanath Tagore, a close friend of Ram Mohan Roy. But after a decade the Brahmo Samaj began to become very popular, because of the new spiritual leadership given to it by Dwarkanath Tagore's son, Devendranath Tagore.

Maharishi Devendranath Tagore:

Devendranath Tagore latterly known as Maharishi or the Saint was born in Calcutta. He received his early education in the school founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In his fourteenth year Devendranath joined the Hindu College. Under the direct influence of a religious father and an orthodox Hindu mother, young Devendra grew up a wilful young man, holding the religion of his forefathers in great reverence and when he attained his manhood, he felt within himself an awakening towards a higher life.

Devendranath's creative leadership assured the Brahmo Samaj of a prominent place in 19th century Bengal.

intellectual life, testified to the vitality of Hindu thought even at the time when it was besieged by Western rationalism and the attraction of scientific knowledge. Devendranath's curiosity for enriching the Brahmo Samaj literature induced him to collect the authentic scriptural sources of Hinduism, in that day unavailable in Bengal. The outcome of Devendranath's for religious truth was in essence the religion of bhakti, as he expressed it "The pure unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brahmanism".¹

Devendranath's intense devotionism and his ability to convey his feelings to others and to organize a service of worship though drawing membership to the Samaj, had little social reform impact on Brahmos, much less on Hindu society in general. Moreover, the Brahmo Samaj under Devendranath did not desire a separation from Hindu society and wished to steer a middle course between popular religion and a total reform. Devendranath's religious aims concerned only the Hindu community and in fact only the high castes within it.

Devendranath was very much alive to the educational needs of the Brahmo community. He wrote: "We (Brahmo Samajists) have not got a single good school of our own where our children can be taught".² Suggesting to start

1. Tagore, Devendranath: "The Autobiography", p.161, this book in Bengali was translated by Satyendranath & Indira Devi.

2. Ibid, p.99.

a school for Hindu Children, Devendranath wrote: "If we all combine could we not set up schools".¹

Devendranath convened a large meeting at which nearly a thousand people participated. About the proceedings and decisions arrived at, Devendranath wrote: "It was resolved thatwe also should have a school where children would be taught free of charge.....Forty thousand rupees were raised then and there".² As a result to his efforts an educational institution called the Hindu-Hitarthi (The well-wisher of Hindus) was founded and Devendranath was appointed the Secretary to carry on its work. After the first experimental school more schools were started and thus the cause of education received a great impetus in his hands.

In 1857 a new addition was made to the ranks of Brehmo Samaj by the entry of Keshub Chander Sen.

Keshub Chandra Sen:

In the middle of the nineteenth century when the emphasis on Westernization began to decrease due to the efforts of some of the reformers, and Eastern Culture came to be better appreciated, and as the synthesis of the two cultures began to be worked out to an ever-increasing extent, the cultural disturbances of the new educational system became less pronounced. It is correct that the new educational policy of the Britishers freed the Indian mind from the bondage of superstitions, but it now began to be understood that all that is new is not surely praise worthy, nor all that is old is condemnable. Discrimination began

1. Ibid, p. 99.

2. Ibid, p. 100.

to be exercised and while absorbing several new ideas from the West, an attempt began to be made to preserve all that is good in the East as well. It is out of this synthesis that the new leadership in Indian national life and particularly in Bengali Brahmo Samaj was born in Keshub Chandra Sen.

Keshub Chandra Sen, born of a well-known Vaidya family of Calcutta, joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1857, "Keshub very early showed great powers of oratory. Among his friends he was regarded as a coming religious leader. He founded in 1860 a Society called the "Sangat Sabha" or the "Believers Association" for the discussion of social and religious reforms".¹ In 1861, he became a whole time missionary of the Samaj and in 1862 he was elevated to the position of the "Acharya" or a minister of the Samaj. But very soon afterwards, because of his radical ideas, serious differences of opinion arose with other leaders and specially with Devendranath Tagore and the retired from the Samaj in 1863. His advocacy of inter-marriage and his objection to the wearing of the sacred thread were two of the most vital objections against him.² In November, 1866 Keshub formed a new society called the "Brahma Samaj of India". While Devendranath Tagore's religious aims were concerned with the Hindu community and specially the high

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1. Andrews, C.F. and Mukerji, Girija: "The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India", p.29.
 2. Majumdar, R.C. (Editor), "British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance", p.103.

castes, Keshub's vision encompassed the whole world and he sought a universal faith.

Keshub Chandra tried to infuse new life into the Brahmo Samaj. Writing about Keshub's infinite strivings, Mazoomdar said "Every social, moral, religious want in himself, or in others, appealed to him. His ambition was to serve every community, all men and women. He lived in the midst of an inextinguishable furnace of aspiration, the heat of which he carried into everything he did. He set fire to whatever he touched. His reform knew no bound; the progress he demanded was restless and ceaseless. Nothing declined in him, everything grew. He wanted to change the very face of the earth".¹

Keshub brought to the Brahma Samaj a dynamic force which it never possessed before. He was the first to inaugurate an all-India movement of religious and social reforms. Keshub made a missionary tour of Bombay, Madras and North-western Provinces and carried his message all over India.

Keshub Chandra Sen launched a comprehensive programme of social reforms which formed a vital aspect of Indian Renaissance. But here we will try to discuss Keshub's reforms particularly in the educational field.

1. Mazoomdar, P.C.: The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chandra Sen, p.9.

In 1855 Keshub established the Colutola Evening School. Young men of contiguous neighbourhood attended the classes of this school and Keshub Chandra himself taught some of the higher branches of English literature.

In 1857, he established another society, perhaps the most useful and successful of all his juvenile organizations, called "Goodwill Fraternity". The society was not to harbour any sectarianism on his part but held his belief "God our father, everyman our brother".¹ and thus it was a purely religious institution, the object of which was both theological and devotional. The Goodwill Fraternity held weekly classes on Sundays, where the higher purposes of the Brahma Samaj were discussed and preached.

In 1862 Keshub founded a model educational institution, called Calcutta College. He made a single-handed attempt in establishing this College, Mozoomdar writes, "where the highest training, both intellectual and moral"² was given to the youth of the land. Some of Keshub's friends volunteered to work as honourary teachers. Keshub never believed in combining theological teaching with ordinary education, he considered it adequate to teach the youthful mind the elements of morality and simple natural religion Keshub was a staunch believer in

1. Ibid, p.61.

2. Ibid, p.77.

early moral training and he felt that the power of example exercised by good and spiritually minded teachers go a long way in the development of morality in the children. On these auspicious principles he began to conduct his work in the Calcutta College.

Keshub, throughout his life, had been a great champion of women education. At a very early stage he began to write well-chosen precepts under the heading of Stree Prati Upadesh (Precepts to the wife). After his return from England in 1870 he established the Indian Reform Association" for social and moral reformation of the Indians. This Association had five sections namely, Female improvement, Education of the working classes, cheap literature, Temperance and Charity.

Keshub put the education of women in the forefront of his programme of social reform. In 1863 he started an organization for educating female members at home. Another association was started in the same year for publishing books and journals and holding essay competition for the same purpose. Several other associations were established by him for the uplift of women. When in England Keshub was so much impressed by the intelligence and refinement of the women of England that on his return from there, he established the Normal School for Indian Women in February 1871 under the Female Improvement Section of the Indian Reform Association.

To supplement the Normal School, Keshub established another institution for women, called Bama Hitaisini Sabha (Society for the benefit of women) where women read papers and carried on discussions which were presided over by Keshub himself. Mozoomdar tells that "these classes and meetings were not open to the public, they were held in the retirement of the Zenana, the restriction of which Keshub released very gradually".¹

Keshub Chandra Sen was very much against the idea of higher education for women. He believed that woman should be educated according to the bent of her nature. She should have an artistic, poetic education with a practical training in household duties, elementary science and the laws of sanitation. He could never tolerate in his mind the idea of an artificial, conventional, strong-mannered or strong-minded womanhood. Keshub repudiated the popular custom of the seclusion of women, was against courtship, flirtation and frivolities.

Keshub wanted to spread educational reforms in other directions also.. He established an Industrial School and working Men's classes. These reforms, writes Mozoomdar, "filled the Brahma Samaj offices with a new kind of activity and turmoil. The Sawing, Chapping, hammering went on with undiminished vigour mouth after mouth; boxes, chairs

1. Ibid. p.139.

and cabinets sprang into existence. Clerks from government offices, graduates from the neighbouring colleges, Brahmo missionaries, headed by Keshub himself took to these occupations with workmanlike avidity, while professional book-binders, tinkers, and carpenters plodded at literary industry, reading primers, and working sums at arithmetic under the feeble light of oil lamps long after nightfall."¹

Keshub founded Albert College, which was affiliated to the Indian Reform Association in 1872. He was most earnest to found a public hall in the heart of Calcutta for "the promotion of literary and social intercourse among all classes of the community".² In 1876 an association styled the Albert Institute was formed and a public hall was built with the following purposes:- (i) Library and newspaper reading, (ii) Lectures and debates, (iii) Soiree and musical entertainments and (iv) Public meetings.

Keshub Chander Sen did a herculean task for the cause of Indian education. Beginning from the Colutolah Evening School, when he was himself a boy, he had successively established many classes and many schools which brought renaissance in Bengal. Keshub never meant to seal the stamp of finality on any one of his reforms; he always intended they should retain their character of progressiveness, and grow with the spirit of the times. His social ideals were

1. Ibid, p.140.

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not taken from any foreign usages. He never failed to respect and learn the Christian and European ideals. Perhaps they, unconsciously and largely, modified his principles and conduct, but instinctively and deliberately he was a Hindu, and a sense of nationality characterized his private life and public measures. He was a Hindu reformer in every sense. In Sir William Hunter's words "Keshub Chandra Sen represented, in a special manner, the fusion of European Science with Indian thought. In his effort to reach the intellects and the conscience of his countrymen, he employed every vehicle of instruction, from the ancient Bengali drama to the modern leading article".¹

The life of Keshub Chandra was full of struggles and his struggles were crowned with success as he was able to advance to the Indians the loftier standards of morality, of religion, and that of freedom of thought. His message helped in the development of the Eastern minds through the science and literature of the West.

Brahmo Samaj movement produced three intellectual giants, the Raja, Devendranath and Keshub. Raja Ram Mohan Roy proclaimed the Unity of the Godhead to a people who believed, against the teachings of their highest scriptures in a multiplicity of Gods. Devendra Nath Tagore proclaimed

1. Hunter, Sir William: 'Testimony in Memoriam given by P.C. Mozoomdar: Op.cit. p.25.

the freedom of our reason from the bondage of ancient scriptural authority. Keshub Chander Sen proclaimed the absolute freedom of the individual conscience from the bondage of caste and customs. The Raja's was not, strictly speaking, a movement of active revolt; Devendranath's was really a movement of religious revolt; Keshub Chandra's, representing the third stage in the evolution of the Brahmo Samaj, was a movement of social revolt.

Educational Reform in Bengal after Keshub Chandra Sen:

The leadership of the 19th and early 20th century social and educational reform movement in Bengal was chiefly in the hands of the members of the Brahmo Samaj and in particularly the Sadharan branch, which broke away from Keshub Chandra Sen and tried to maintain the social consciousness and reforming impulse given by Keshub to the Samajists. Anand Mohan Bose, a founding member of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, led the new body in several of its social and educational endeavours. Bose and his colleagues, including Dwarkanath Ganguli, Siva Nath Sastri and Durga Mohan Das took a serious interest in education for girls and women. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj added to the number of girls' schools already under Brahmo directions, and daughters of Sadharan Brahmos made up the bulk of the early women graduates from Calcutta University.¹ Boys' schools

1. Gupta, Atulchandra (ed.): 'Studies in the Bengal Renaissance', p.502.

were also founded and a Brahma College, the City College in Calcutta in the 1880's set a new educational standard by introducing courses in Carpentry and instruction in physical and moral development. Siva Nath Sastri began social work for depressed classes in the 1890's and in 1908 a Depressed class Mission was started.

The Sadharan Brahma Samaj's practical social work was an impressive reminder of the continuing didaction of some Brahmos to the welfare of society. However, the Samaj did not extend its educational drives into social reform organizational work. Brahmos almost ignored those issues which reformers elsewhere considered crucial.

In 1849,"the first school for Hindu girls of the higher castes was founded in Calcutta",¹ called the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya, which owed its origin to Drinkwater Bethune and Pandit Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar, who had to face a great difficulty in securing its first batch of students. The parents who sent their daughters were subjected to persecution and even excommunication. But the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya served as a first foundation stone of a general movement of women's education. Pandit Vidyasagar, who was inspector of schools with jurisdiction over certain districts, had started a number of girls' schools and run them at his own expenses.

1. Natraja,S: "A Century of Social Reform in India", p.46.

But in a unique category among Bengali social reforms was Sasipada Banerjee, who regarded himself as a reformed Hindu, and established his own religious body, the Sadharen Dharma Sabha. Sasipada, son of a teacher and educationist, unlike other social reformers before him, came from the middle class family of Barahonagar.

The education of women was little thought of in 1860. But Sasipada first broke down the prejudices of his own wife, whom he had taught to read and write, and proceeded with her assistance to turn his home into a school, where Sasipada educated young girls, including widows. He tried to gain government help for setting up a National School for the education of adult women, but Vidyasagar and Keshub Chandra gave no encouragement to Sasipada being more conservative than him. So in 1873 Sasipada, with his own initiative, saw the normal school project realized with the establishment of the Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya near Calcutta. In 1876 a similar institution, the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya was founded by Durga Mohan Das and Anand Mohan Bose. By the 1880's in Bengal the education of high-caste girls and women were no longer a novelty, and even Keshub Chandra Sen now supported a normal school.

Simultaneously with his high-caste female education crusade Sasipada strove to ameliorate the condition of the low-caste working people of Calcutta. He set up a night school and working men's club for factory workers in 1860.

In his night schools his attempt was to impart education quickly and intelligently. Here he did not neglect in any way the education of the working class women. He gave lantern lectures, with success, in his night schools. He began to publish the 'Bharat Sramajiva' (Indian Labourer) a monthly illustrated paper, selling for one pice,"said to have been the first labour journal in India".¹ In 1873 Sasipada started a weekly journal publicizing workers grievances.

Sasipada's main preoccupation was to improve the treatment that Hindu society gave to women, and especially to widows. He championed the cause of widow - remarriage, but more far-reaching than remarriage was the education for the otherwise statusless widow. Sasipada admitted widows in his schools, but the rehabilitation of the widows as useful members of society did not begin until Sasipada founded the Widow's House in 1887 in Calcutta, the first such institution in India. This institution had a curriculum of home economics in addition to academic subjects and it was conducted along orthodox lines.

By the end of the nineteenth century the social reform movement in Bengal by individual crusaders was virtually at an end and now whole of the Bengali society had become enthusiastic to work for their social rights and educational progress.

1. Gupta, Atulchandra: Op.cit. p.493.

B O M B A Y R E F O R M M O V E M E N T

The Brahmo Samaj movement in Calcutta had become a hub of social reform movements for whole of India. Reformers from all parts of the country observed very keenly the progress of the Bengal social reform movements, but Bombay did not lag behind Calcutta in producing young rebels, chiefly the products of the Elphinstone Institution, founded in 1827 to promote English education. Bombay reform movement developed along somewhat different lines from the Calcutta reform movement "partly because the example of the Calcutta Brahmos with their Schism and isolation from the Hindu community served as a warning; partly too because in Bombay's heterogeneous population there were degrees of revolt from tradition and custom and great caution was exercised not to drive away any of them".¹ So in Bombay all the reforms were not from any Samaj. In Bombay city all reforms spread from the students' Literary and Scientific Society which sponsored lectures, many of whose themes were as rebellious as those heard in Bengali student groups. The Bombay social revolt "from those early years took a form which differed from the Bengal revolt. Despite proclamations of rebellion, secrecy in breaking caste laws and an outward guise of conformity

1. Natarajan, S: 'A Century of Social Reform in India', p. 63.

with tradition marked the judiciousness of the Bombay approach to social dissent in contrast to publicity-conscious Bengal, where rebels and orthodox alike conspired to make every social deviation a notorious cause".¹ Bombay's social revolt developed more surely than Bengal's into movements for general social and particular educational reforms.

In the 1830's Bal Gangadhar Shastri Jambhekar, assistant professor in the Elphinstone Institution, who was very liberal in his religious attitudes and was completely free from caste and creed prejudices, influenced a large number of students among whom were Dadabhai Naoroji and Sarabjee Shapurjee Bengalee, two men who were to play a great part in educational and social reform in Bombay. It was in 1849 that the students of the Institution, encouraged by their English professors, established the 'students Literary and Scientific Society' where the great interest was provoked by discussions on women's education. In the organization of the Society and in giving effect to the conclusions arrived at by its discussions, Jagan Nath Shankershat and Dadabhai Naoroji played a leading role. And from this Society grew other associations covering the fields of religious reforms, Women's education and social reform.

Hindu Missionary Society of Gagananrao Vaidya:

The Hindu Missionary Society was started by Gagananrao Vaidya, a Sanskrit scholar of repute. Though this society

1. Heimsath, Charles H: "Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform"., pp.13-14.

was mainly started for re-admitting converts to Christianity into Hindu Society, but it did not confine its purpose only to that narrow limits. This society did a remarkable work in educational reform also.

Gajananrao set up a primary school and a secondary school teaching up to the fifth English standard with his wife, Kamalabai Vaidya, as the headmistress. In these schools several young teachers gave their services free because the Missionary Society lacked funds. Gajananrao himself taught Sanskrit, while his two brothers helped in teaching mathematics and drawing. In 1910 the schools were able to send few students up for Matriculation examination of Bombay University. Gajananrao's efforts led to the spread of girls education and many of his own students started girls' high schools in Bombay and elsewhere.

Educational Reform in Bombay by other Young Hindu Reformers:

Many other young Hindu reformers worked for the spread of women education in Bombay. In 1909 Nanu Narayan Kothare started the Chandaramji Girls' High School with funds diverted from a religious trust. In 1851 the Students' Society formed a Gujarati Association, the Dnyan Prasarak Mandal which conducted meetings, published tracts and held essay contests. This Mandal did a praise-worthy work for the cause of education in Bombay. Another great worker for the emancipation of women was Karsondas Mulji, a young

Baniya student and later on a reformer, who wrote his famous tract on widow-remarriage, started teaching at the young age of twenty and published his articles on social and educational topics in 'Rast Goftar' (Truth Teller) a Gujarati weekly started by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1851.

Education Reform by Parsis:

On public matters of social concern the Bombay Parsis provided singular leadership for Western India in the 19th and early 20th century, while they maintained the separate identity as a religious group. Being one of the first Indian groups to take advantage of western education and the liberalization of social customs stimulated by association with Europeans, the Parsi community substantially advanced the cause of social reform first, by carrying out reform and welfare schemes for itself, and next by providing leadership for reform movements in the general public.¹ Especially to foster the cause of women in breaking the hold of narrow orthodoxy over the Parsi community and providing good education to women Parsis did a matchless work. Sorabji Shapurji Bengalli was right no doubt when he claimed in 1868 that "the Parsis may, with proper pride, point to the fact that, of all purely Asiatic communities, they ... may claim honour as the first of Oriental peoples who, by

1. Heimsath, Charles H: "Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform", p.148.

legally defining her individual marital rights, have raised women to a definitively higher social position on the basis of her personal claims as a reasonable and responsible being".¹

The need for the education of women was first felt among the Parsis. Between 1840 and 1855, the Parsi community had gone through all the agonies of adjustment to the time. In 1840, Maneekjee Cursetjee had convulsed the orthodox by openly dining with Europeans during his visit to Europe; in 1852, a Parsi couple had created a sensation by dining out together and visiting the European shops; and in 1855 Dhunjeebhoy Nusserwanjee Cama shook the orthodox by inviting a few English friends to a dinner at his own house. All this constituted no challenge to society because they were not meant as revolts. They were in a sense unavoidable since the English themselves practised them, and the English were in power".² This is an open fact that a minority quickly conforms to the customs of the ruling class and Parsi community being a numerically negligible minority had the choice between ready adoptability or extinction. Moreover, the Parsis being engaged in commerce had to keep good relations with the Europeans. By 1865 mixing publicly with the Europeans had become a normal feature of the Parsi society.

1. Natesan, G. A. (ed.): "Famous Parsis: Biographical & Critical Sketches", p. 88.

2. Natrajan S: Op. cit. p. 54.

Educational Reform of Parsis by Framji Cowasjee Banajee:

Providing Parsi community English education was quite a different matter. Framji Cowasjee Banajee was a pioneer to this venture. He gave his daughter English education, and also gave in support to his community's institutions, a large amount of his well-earned money. His philanthropies pertain especially to the cause of education - both male and female. Though Framji himself was not highly educated, nor was he imbued with ideas of religious or social reform, but because of having a farsight in him he took a keen interest in the furtherance of the cause of scientific and general education among the people of his community. Framji had shrewd commonsense, so he appreciated the value of education. Later he was to overcome the prejudice of the community against medical education by providing rooms for students of his own community near the Medical College, where they could undergo the necessary purificatory ceremonies.

Educational Work by other Parsis:

Framji's example of educational work was followed by Maneckjee Cursetjee, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and Cursetjee Nusserwanjee Cama. Sir Jamsetjee contributed two lakh of rupees for opening the Government Medical College with which commenced a new era of medical education in Bombay. His philanthropy towards his own community can be understood when he contributed more than four and a half lakh of rupees

for the institutions to provide education to poor Parsi children. Being a lover of Art, Sir Jamsetjee also established an arts school.

Sir Jamsetjee being a pioneer of social and educational reform, sympathised with the movement for the education of girls and the emancipation of womanhood from the tyranny of the social customs of his times and established four girls' schools in Bombay.

Another Parsi, Cursetjee Nusserwanjee Cama was a great crusader for the cause of education. He helped the progressive youngmen of Parsi community to establish three girls' schools. Upto 1864 there was such a great flood of Parsi girls' schools in the Bombay Presidency that in 1865, it had become compulsory for the Parsi community to place all these schools under a single society, the Parsi Girls' School Association, with Framjee Nusserwanjee Patel as the Chairman and Naoroji Ferdoonji and Sorajbi Shapurji Bengalli as secretaries. A balance between the enthusiasm of the two youngmen and the caution of the Chairman was maintained and the cause of women's education firmly established. The schools were maintained by the splendid generosity of Cursetjee Nusserwanjee Cama and his family who also supported two journals, the "Stri Bodh" for women started in 1857 and the "Rast Goftar" devoted to social reforms launched by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1851.

Another Parsi, Byramjee Jejeebhoy, who was appointed

in 1867 as a Fellow of the Bombay University, had such a great love for the advancement of general and medical education that he lavishly donated for the Government Medical schools at Ahmedabad and Poona, the High School at Thana and the Anglo-Vernacular School at Bhiwandi. But the most notable of his charities was the Byramjee Jejeebhoy Charitable Institution, "whereby he made over the Trustees Government paper of the face value of rupees three lakh and fifty thousand for the establishment of an institution for the free education of the children of poor Parsis".¹ The Trustees started a College of Commerce which was a bold attempt for the spread of Commercial education in Bombay and the credit for that goes to P.N. Wadia, the Managing Trustee who received the whole-hearted support from Jejeebhoy's family.

For an outstanding educational and philanthropic work for Parsi community, the name of Sorabji Shapurji Bengalli outshines all other Parsi reformers. Sorabji was a great reformer and one of the great leaders in the public life of his time, who illumined the historic period of the 19th century. Sorabji stands forth as the pioneer of female education. Sorabji donated Rs.65,000 in the name of his mother and founded Bhicaji Bengalli School which remained a source of good education to the middle and

1. Op.cit., Famous Parsis, p.53.

poor classes of the Parsi community. Through the "Rast Goftar" newspaper Sorabji exercised his journalistic powers for carrying on propaganda in favour of educational and social reform among all classes of people.

Sorabji helped Naoroji Furdoonji in the establishment of the "Rahnumaya - Mazdayasnam Sabha" whose purpose was to start an agitation for the annihilation of the old weeds of custom and traditions that had gathered round the Parsi social life. Education for both boys and girls was another object which the Rahnumaya Association had in view. The path for the adoption of its reforms was made smooth by the English and the Vernacular education which had generally spread among the Parsi community in subsequent years.

For the work done for the educational renaissance of the Parsi community the name of Dadabhai Naoroji comes in the fore front. "Dadabhai's life between 1845, when he finished his studies, and 1856, when he left for England, was an eventful one, marked by wonted energy and selfless devotion",¹ towards the cause of education. Dadabhai's activities covered a very wide range. With the help of Principal Patton, Dadabhai organized the "Students' Literary and Scientific Society". He also contributed diligently to a Journal known as the "Students' Literary Miscellany" started by the students of Elphinstone Institution.

1. Op.cit., 'Famous Parsis', p.105.

Dadabhai started branches of the students' society under the name of Dhyan Prasarak Mandali for discussions in the Gujarati and Marathi languages and delivered lectures himself under the auspices of that Mandali.

To Dadabhai Bombay owed her first girls' schools, which were opened amidst much opposition. Natesan writes "At one of the meetings of the 'Students' Literary and Scientific Society', a stirring paper on the advantages of female education was read by a gentleman named Behramji Ghandi; and Professor Patton, who presided, urged upon the members, for their active participation. Led by Dadabhai, a number of the members opened classes in various parts of Bombay, and taught them themselves during their spare hours. These classes subsequently developed into the 'Students Literary and Scientific Society's Marathi and Parsi Girls' Schools'.¹ Dadabhai was thus one of the pioneers of female education in Bombay. He also took an active part in establishing the Framji Institute in Bombay.

But Dadabhai Naoroji was not the last of all Parsi reformers of the 19th and early 20th century, who worked for the cause of education for the Parsi community, there was a galaxy of reformers, who worked even after Dadabhai had done his remarkable work. The names of Kharshedji Rustamji Cama, Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata, Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, Ferozeshah Mehta, Behramji M. Malabari, Jivanji Jamshedji Modi and many others shine markedly in the

1. Op.cit., 'Famous Parsis,' pp.106-7.

history of Parsi Reformers, who especially worked for the cause of education.

The Prarthana Samaj and Mahadev Govind Ranade:

In 1867 the special genius of the Bombay school of reform brought forth its original contribution to modern Indian theism, the Prarthana (Prayer) Samaj. Its origin was due to the missionary enthusiasm of Keshub Chandra Sen, the Brahmo Samaj leader, who visited Bombay in 1864 and influenced Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang to form the Samaj, Keshub visited Bombay again in 1868 to give the new Samaj his personal encouragements. In principles the Prarthana Samaj very closely resembled Keshub's branch of Brahmo Samaj, but in ideals it very much differed from it. The leaders who infused strength in the Samaj were R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade, but it was chiefly Ranade who tried to give the Samaj a more comprehensive meaning and philosophic basis, and his historic essay entitled "Theists' Confession of Faith"¹ was an attempt in that direction.

The main planks of the Prarthana Samaj were theistic worship, educational and social reform. It did not preach any subtle philosophy or any new literature, nor it had much missionary activity. Its main object was the organization of social reform movement, which "laid special

1. Ranade, M.G: "Religious and Social Reform"- A collection Essays and Speeches", p.250.

stress on the abandonment of caste, introduction of widow remarriage, encouragement of female education and the abolition of purdah and child marriage".¹

The Prarthana Samaj derives its theism from Hinduism but it does not regard the Vedas as divine or infallible, it completely denies the ideas of Karma, transmigration of soul and the incarnation of God. Prarthana Samaj reveres the Upanishads but stresses the idea of devotion to a personal God, through bhakti. Theism remained for long, for many social reformers, as the only acceptable conception of God, because God as a personal divinity with moral purposes provided a necessary link between religious devotion and worldly righteousness. It was devotionally preached by the Prarthana Samajists to produce in the minds of people an inseparable relationship between reverence for God and reverence for man. But "a rigid exclusion of idolatry and a definite break from the caste system were not regarded as essential conditions of membership",² of the Prarthana Samaj. The Samaj did not set itself apart from Hindu society. This Samaj draws its nourishment to a great extent from the Hindu scriptures, the bhakti poems and stories of Marathi and Gujarati saints.

The predominant attitude before the Prarthana Samaj

1. Majumdar, R.C. : "British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance" p. 107.

2. Majumdar, R.C. Op.cit; p. 107.

was that religious reform and social and educational reforms could proceed along different courses and at varying rates and no reform can involve a sharp break with the past. Ranade worked not on any single line, but on all lines together - social, religious, educational and political.

The Prarthana Samaj did not spread widely in Bombay, because of its moderate views Prarthana Samaj became very popular in Madras.

Most important achievement of Ranade towards education was that he recognized the necessity of Primary and Secondary education for women in Poona. He privately taught English and Marathi to his illiterate wife, Ramabai and encouraged her to visit the houses of illiterate locality of Poona to convince the women of the need of education of their daughters. In 1881 Ranade organized the Arya Mahila Samaj and in 1884 a school for girls was opened in Poona. Ranade was aware of the educational advancements made by the Parsi community of Bombay and same he wanted to achieve in Poona.

After the death of Ranade in 1901 his educational reform work was taken over by his energetic wife, Ramabai. She started the Hindu Ladies' Social and Literary Club' in her own house. She organized free classes to educate married women and widows and to teach them sewing, knitting

and embroidery. She arranged weekly lectures on general subjects. A circle of ladies belonging to different communities and religions gathered round her and Ramabai helped all. In 1903 she became a member of the Lady Dufferin Fund Committee and she persuaded women to learn nursing and midwifery. In her twenty three years of public life Ramabai stressed the need for the education of women and worked tirelessly for the emancipation of women from the ignorance of orthodoxy and prepared them for the changing social conditions of the day.

There were many other educational movements taking place in India in the middle of nineteenth century - Swami Dayananda's Arya Samaj did influence the northern India and helped in the growth of a network of educational institutions providing education according to the philosophy of Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda was another great social thinker whose ideas and works influenced the educated middle class society and his approach of solving the social problems and poverty of Indians through education proved a good signal for the mushroom growth of educational institutions throughout the country and another thinker and better known as modernist, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan did a remarkable work for the education and social revolution for the Muslim Community of the country. It was at that time that

Annie Besant appeared on the Indian scene.

In this chapter, the author tried merely to give a general survey of the historical background of Indian Education, its expansion and reforms during the nineteenth century, in order to provide a clear understanding of the educational and social background, when Annie Besant had arrived in India and worked for the cause of national education of people of this country.

CHAPTER - I I

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF ANNIE BESANT'S THOUGHT.

For studying the philosophical views of any thinker it becomes necessary in the first instance to investigate into the impacts which moulded the thoughts of that thinker. Annie Besant is in no way an exception to this rule. She started to write on the intricacies of philosophy from a very young age of twenty-six years and went on enriching the field of philosophy upto her last, eighty-sixth year of life. In such a long span of life she wrote on so many different topics of philosophy - education, politics, sociology and economics - that it has become difficult for her interpreters to evaluate her philosophy from all the angles. Thus there are a score of opinions in adjudging her position as a philosopher. Some regard her as the greatest philosopher of her time whereas others give her merely the position of a historian of philosophy. These extreme views about the appreciation of her work raise a doubt in our mind whether Annie Besant was at all a philosopher. Therefore it becomes essential to study the social milieu in which Annie Besant grew up, worked and lived, before we interpret her philosophy in studying her educational ideas and schemes.

The present part of this Chapter will thus deal with the environmental factors which shaped her life and influenced

her religious, metaphysical, ethical, humanistic and educational outlook.

Here the author has tried to make a general survey of Annie Besant's thought in order to study the chief currents which influenced her philosophy. The main effort will be made to study her work in relation to the evolutionary stages of her life. Her belief in making new experiments provided a marked development of her ideas. As Annie Besant's interests were multifarious, therefore numerous new experiences were being added to her developing life every moment. Geoffery West, writing about Annie Besant's many sided contributions says: "She battled for free-thought in days when hell was an ever threatening reality, and even intelligent clergymen - leaders of religious thought - declared it the church's study, not hers, to ascertain the truth; she strove against the subjection of women, for their education and equality, in a period when the general attitude was the summed up in two sentences for a contemporary article: 'No women ought to be encouraged in the belief that she has separate interest or separate duties. God and nature have merged her existence in that of her husband'. She gave in the seventies the first popular impulse to the modern birth-control movement by her public defence of its principles in the face of every insult and ascription of obscene motive; she upheld upon platform and in print the rights of smaller nationalities at a time when the intoxication of empire

still rose unrestrained. She was a socialist before socialism became respectable, an advocate and organizer of Trade Unions when even the workers accepted them unwillingly, propagandist against royalty, capital punishment, the existing land system, and for women suffrage and equal justice. Upon all these issues she was, if never alone, a pioneer, and time has justified her".¹

Though Annie Besant's intellectual pursuits were employed in so different fields of human knowledge yet there existed no trace of mediocrity in any any of the numerous branches of her activities and thought. Every field of her activities - may it be religion, philosophy, politics or education - was enriched equally remarkably by her speeches and writings. She had not specialized in any one particular branch of knowledge but had tried to work for 'TRUTH' in all its shapes and forms. Her life of adventures and immensity of range has made her critics to think that "philosophical thought" was beyond her capacity and her judgements repeatedly fallible.² This estimate of Annie Besant's thought is unfair. It would be worthwhile to study Annie Besant, as C.Jinarajadasa suggests, "as an artist than as a lecturer of the professional type, because she does not survey any subject in the entirety, but gives

1. West, Geoffrey: 'Mrs. Annie Besant' - page 10, London, Gerald Howe, Ltd., 1929.

2. Besterman, Theodore: 'Mrs. Annie Besant' page 269, London, Kegan Paul, 1934.

a definite presentation of it from an angle which she selects as a painter does when painting a land scape".¹ Writing thirty years before the above quoted reference C.Jinarajadasa gives a similar remark about Annie Besant when he says about her, "For when a soul is a hero in every fibre of her being, and an artist in every one of her instincts, that soul in action cannot but be poet and prophet, patriot and leader!"² Thus in all the lectures and writings of Annie Besant the expression was that of an artist, but her thought was always that of a versatile thinker.

To understand her thought in its right perspective we need to have a detailed knowledge of those environmental factors and influences which though non-philosophical in their contents, had brought from Dr. Annie Besant certain philosophical responses. There is some danger that we may look at these influences in a very detached way but there is no other alternative, worthwhile, to it.

Instead of splitting up the personality of Annie Besant into water tight compartments, which will make the study unscientific and unrealistic, it will be useful to study the origin and development of her philosophical ideas under following heads and sub-heads:-

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1. Jinarajadasa, C: "The Diamond Soul", p.9, an article published in 'The Theosophist', Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, October, 1947.
 2. Jinarajadasa, C: Mrs. Besant's Poems', New India, paper of 20th October, 1917, p.4.

A: Mrs. Annie Besant's early life and works:

- (1) Early Life, and
- (2) Inner development resulting in her copious works.

B: Environmental Factors which shaped her philosophy:

- (1) Formal Education,
- (2) The influence of some persons,
- (3) The influence of authors and books,
- (4) The personal sufferings,
- (5) The success of early experiments, and
- (6) The outer appearance of her philosophy.

C: Causes that led to her arrival in India in 1893.

- (1) Interest in Indian situation,
- (2) Theosophical work,
- (3) Call for Educational Renaissance, and
- (4) Attachment by previous incarnations.

D: Educational Reform Movement under way at the time of her arrival e.g. Revivalists like Dayanand and Vivekanand, and Modernists like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

(A)

Mrs. Besant's Early Life and works:

(1) Early Life:

Annie Besant was born on 1st October, 1847 in London in 'Wood' family, having three quarters of blood and all her heart Irish. Her birth in London was a grievance to her because she felt "playfully inclined to grudge the English

blood"¹ which was in her father's veins, due to his English father. Annie was prouder of her mother's family than that of her father's, for both her mother's parents had come to England from Ireland, whereas only her father's mother had done so.

Annie's mother, Emily Roche Morris, was having sweet grey Irish eyes and curling masses of raven-black hair, whose face, writes Annie Besant, "made the beauty of home and whose love was both sun and shield.....I have never met a woman more self-lessly devoted to those she loved, more passionately contemptuous of all that was mean or base, more keenly sensitive on every question of honour, more iron in will, more sweet in tenderness, than the mother who made my girlhood sunny as dreamland".²

Annie's father, William Burton Perse Wood qualified as a doctor, writes Annie Besant "was keenly intellectual and splendidly educated, a mathematician and a good classical scholar, thoroughly master of French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, with a smattering of Hebrew, Gaelic, the treasures of ancient and of modern literature were his daily house hold delight",³ and he liked to read aloud to his wife while she worked, declaiming from 'Queen Mab' or translating from foreign poets. William Wood was also a student of philosophy and was "deeply and steadily sceptical".⁴

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, page 111.

2. Ibid, p.116.

3. Ibid, p.120.

4. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p.9.

Deep knowledge of philosophy had made Annie's father to outgrow the orthodox whims and beliefs of his time.

Annie's mother, before her marriage, was a strict Roman Catholic and devoted to Christianity, who did not fully share her husband's scepticism, she held the notion "that women should be religious; while men might philosophise as they would".¹ Her union with a liberal and unorthodox husband had modified and partially rationalized her own beliefs and in her mature years she even began to enjoy reading such theological liberals as Jowett, Colenso and Stanley. The scepticism of William Wood, writes Annie Besant, "so deeply influenced her (Annie's mother) own intellectual life that she utterly rejected the most irrational dogmas of Christianity, such as eternal punishment, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the doctrine that faith is necessary to salvation, the equality of Christ with God, the infallibility of the Bible; she made morality of life, not orthodoxy of belief, her measure of religion."² In the latter years of life Annie Besant's mother shrank back intellectually from the crude dogmas of orthodox Christianity, but clung poetically to the artistic side of religion, to its art and to its music, to the grandeur of its glorious fanes, and the solemnity of its stately ritual. About the

1. Loc.Cit. p.9.

2. Loc. Cit.p.9.

religious attachment of the latter life of her mother, Annie Besant writes "she detested the meretricious show, the tinsel gaudiness, the bowing and genuflecting, the candles and the draperies, of Romanism and of its pinchbeck imitator Titualism".¹

Both the parents of young Annie had rebellious attitude against the dogmas that crush the reason of a man, but young Annie took religion in strenuous fashion. She writes "As a child I was mystical and imaginative, religious to the very finger-tips and with a certain faculty for seeing visions and dreaming dreams".² In her childhood, elves and fairies of all sorts were very real things and her dolls were as really children as she was herself a child. All the objects about her were to her alive, the flowers that she kissed as much as the kitten she petted and she spent most of her time in 'making-believe' and living out all sorts of lovely stories among her treasured inanimate play-things. But when Annie Besant's dreamful fancy joined hands with religion, she became rebellious against the dogmas.

Annie Besant was a voracious reader. Her mother often objected to her reading of controversial books dealt with the points of issue between Christianity and free-thought, but Annie did not stop because she believed that

1. Ibid, p.9.

2. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.122.

to search for truth was alone "loyalty to God and charity to the souls of men".¹

The Easter of 1866 proved a memorable date in the life of young Annie because it saw, waked and smothered her first doubt. By chance Annie resolved to write a brief history of the "Holy week" of 1866, compiled from the four gospels, but she could not write the whole of the week. Annie Besant writes, "At this point I broke down. I had been getting more and more uneasy and distressed as I went on, but when I found that the Jews would not go into the judgement hall lest they should be defiled, because they desired to eat the passover, having previously seen that Jesus had actually eaten the passover with his disciples the evening before; when after writing down that he was crucified at 9 A.M., and that there was darkness over all the land from 12 to 3 P.M., I found that three hours after he was crucified he was standing in the judgement hall, and that at the very hour at which the miraculous darkness covered, the earth; when I saw that I was writing a discord instead of a harmony, I threw down my pen and shut up my Bible".²

As we understand that "doubt" is the main basis of all distinguished philosophical thought, so also Annie Besant

1. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p.32.

2. Ibid, pp.33-34.

has built her philosophy on the foundation of "doubt" arisen on the Easter of 1866. She, although, fasted as penance for her involuntary sin of mischief of that week, but the first doubt was caused and though swiftly she smothered it up, buried it and smoothed the turf over its grave. But it had been there, it had none the less raised its head and led Annie Besant to, finally, give up religion and make experiments with materialism, free-thought, Fabian Socialism and Theosophical movements of her time.

Annie Wood was the middle child between two brothers Henry and Alfred. Henry was two years older than Annie and Alfred three years younger. Annie was hardly of five years that her father died of consumption, in October 1852, and few months after her younger brother Alfred - a delicate, blue-eyed, pale-golden-haired infant passionately devoted to his father - also died. The death of beloved husband turned her, black, glossy and abundant, hair white in one night of agony and the death of loveable son brought her per-mature old age. In a very short time Annie's mother was broken and tired. Now began the time of struggle and of anxiety in the life of her destitute mother. Writing about her family's conditions after the death of her father, Annie says, "When he died, he believed that he left his wife, and children safe, at least from pecuniary distress. It was no so. I know nothing of the details, but the outcome of all was that nothing was left for the widow and children,

save a trifle of ready money".¹

So the first thing the distracted widow did to retrain was to move her little flock down to Richmond Terrace, Clapham, which was so close to the protection of her mother and father as she could get. But here the family stayed poorly enough for several months and to make Henry to study in a good school it was necessary to move the whole family to Harrow and also to find some means of earning an income. Mrs. Wood, Annie's mother, took a suitable house over the shop of a grocer and turned it into a boarding-house for some of the Harrow boys and thus gained means to support her family and prepare Henry to enter Harrow school. This arrangement lasted for ten years until Henry left Harrow and joined the Clare College, Cambridge, on a scholarship.

(2) Inner Development of Annie Besant resulting in her Copious Works.

This slender portion has been devoted to a cursory survey of the writings of Annie Besant from philosophical point of view. Annie Besant published her 330 books and pamphlets and, in collaboration with others, 25 books mainly on occult and religious subjects.² A good number of her books and pamphlets are purely of philosophical purview covering educational topics, therefore an attempt has been

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.127

2. The Annie Besant Centenary Book, (1847-1947) published by The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee, Adyar, Madras, 1947, p.256.

made here to re-emphasize certain aspects of her work so as to provide an understanding of the inner development of Annie Besant as a philosopher.

The life of Annie Besant as a philosophical writer can be divided into four major phases because Annie Besant received four notable twists in her intellectual career which influenced her thought from time to time. For a clear understanding these dramatic turnings of her life can be classified as under:

- (i) Annie Besant as a Free-thinker Theist,
- (ii) Annie Besant as an Atheist and National Secularist,
- (iii) Annie Besant as a Fabian Socialist, and
- (iv) Annie Besant as a Theosophist.

(i) Annie Besant as a Free-thinker Theist:

The very first writing of Annie Besant on a philosophical subject was "The Lives of the Black Letter Saints", which she wrote, most probably, in 1866-67. According to the Calender of the Church of England there are two kinds of saints - red and black. The red saints are important and special services appointed for them. The black saints are only preserved in black letters on church calenders. Annie took each black-letter day, did some ecclesiastical research and wrote the life of the particular saint belonging to it. So she collected all the volumes of church history and legend and wrote the book. This book, Annie Besant submitted to MacMillans, who sent it to a person who prepared series

of church books for children. But this book was never published.

"A Book of Hymns" edited by the Rev. Charles Voysey in 1872 had three poems of Annie Besant. Two poems were 'Prayer' and 'For the naming of a child'. The third, bearing no title, expressed her scepticism about God's direct revelation of Himself to man. This poem concerned to 'that spiritual liberty which man is driven to discover in the process of evolution'.¹ This poem reads like a chant from

1. This poem of Annie Besant was published by C. Jinarajadasa on page 4, in 'New India', Madras, 20th October, 1917. Writing in the 'Theosophist' XXXIX (November 1917) page 124, Annie Besant says "Mr. Jinarajadasa has unearthed the following old poem of mine.....It must have been written in 1873" (but 1872 seems more correct). It will be interesting to record that old poem here, which was written by Annie Besant at the age of 25.

Never yet has been broken
The silence eternal;
Never yet has been spoken
In accents supernal
God's thought of Himself.

We grope in our blindness,
The darkness enfolds Him;
O fatherly kindness.
That he who beholds Him.
May see with the Soul.

Still in veil is unriven
That hides the All-holy;
Still no token is given
That satisfied wholly
The cravings of man.

But unhasting advances
The march of the ages,
The truth-seeker's glances
Unrolling the pages
Of God's revelation.

one of the Upanishads.

In 1873 Annie Besant wrote "On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth" a free-thought essay in which an enquiry was made into the nature of Jesus by an examination of the Synoptic gospels, edited and prefaced by Rev. Charles Voysey. This essay was written purposely for Thoma Scott, a publisher of heretical pamphlets, who published this and her later essays to be signed simply as 'By the wife of a Beneficed clergyman'. The importance of this essay lies not only in this fact that this reflected most of her earlier experiences and contemporary thinking, but also that it forcefully enunciated some of her fundamental thought which have featured repeatedly in her other earlier writings. This essay powerfully reflects her own free-thought to denounce Jesus as Deity.

Under the same auspices, a continuity of the previous essay was brought out, entitled: "According to St. John. On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, Part II. A comparison between the Fourth Gospel and the Three Synoptics". This essay was also written in 1873. In this essay Annie Besant

1. (Contd. from page 77)

Impatience unheeding,
Time slowly revolving
Unresting, unspeeding,
Is ever evolving
Fresh truth about God.

Human speech has not broken
The stillness supernal,
Yet there ever is spoken,
Through silence eternal,
With growing distinctness
God's thought of Himself.

rejected as unauthentic "the theological and philosophical treatise which bears the name of John", charging it with being "fatally destructive of all true faiths towards God". Both these essays were published to establish disbelief in the supernatural claims of christ.

In was from 1873 to 1875 that Annie Besant wrote a good number of pamphlets for Thomas Scott. Through these pamphlets, writes Arthur H. Nethercot, the biographer of Annie Besant, "a way was open to her by which she could forget her troubles (of her married life and financial problems) and at the same time help to alleviate them".¹ She turned out half a dozen of these tracts with some speed in 1874. All these essays were pointed, cogent and often highly personalized attacks on churchly dogmas, she used such titles as "On the Atonement", "On Eternal Torture", "On the Mediation", "Salvation of Ecclesiastical Christianity", and "On Inspiration". She also wrote discussions of more general topics, including "On the Religious Education of Children", "Natural Religion Vs revealed religion", and "The Ethics of Punishment". All these pamphlets, writes a biographer of Annie Besant, Theodore Besterman, "were straightforward and methodical but uninspired presentation of the logical case against item after item in the christian dogma. She was always careful to explain, however that she

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: First Five Lines of Annie Besant. p.68.

was not attacking the notion of Deity, and that she was merely arguing against certain christian doctrines, and eventually against christianity itself."¹

In 1875 Annie Besant wrote "Euthanasia" in which she argued for the painless killing of persons suffering from hopeless and painless diseases. Similarly she wrote "On Prayer" and "On the Nature and Existence of God". During this year Annie Besant was feeling an atmosphere of conflict in her mind. In her "Autobiographical Sketches" Annie Besant writes, "I had nothing left of the old faith save belief in "a God", and that began slowly to melt away. The Theistic axiom: "If there be a God at all he must be at least as good as his highest creature", began with an "if" and to that "if" I turned my attention..... I questioned, are we sure that there is a Creator? Granted that, if there is, he must be above his highest creature, but - is there such a being?What if God were only man's own image reflected in the mirror of man's mind? What if man were the Creator, not the revelation of his God?"²

1. Besterman, Theodore: Mrs. Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet, p.53

2. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches. pp.85-86.

The pamphlets of 1875 clearly expressed the attacks of Annie Besant on the limitation of human intelligence and its incapacity for understanding the nature of God, presented as infinite and absolute. Annie Besant had entirely given up the use of prayer, not because she was an Atheist, but because she was still a Theist. Prayer seemed to her, to be absurd, if she believed in a God who was wiser and better than herself. An all-wise God did not need the suggestions: an all-good God would do all that was best without her prompting. Annie Besant regarded the use of prayer¹ as a blasphemous absurdity and for a considerable

1. C.Jinarajadasa's article - 'Mrs.Besant's Poems - published in New India, of 20th October, 1917, p.4. This poem provides a brilliant description of Annie Besant's outlook on prayer. The poem reads as under:

Who pants and struggles to be free,
Who strives for others' liberty,
Who, failing, still works patiently,
He truly prays.

Who, loving all, dare none despise,
But with the worst can sympathise,
Who for a truth a martyr dies
He truly prays.

Who, when a truth to him is known,
Embraces it through smile or frown,
Who dares to hold it though alone,
He truly prays.

In musing, strength must come to dare,
Petitions are but empty air,
Brave action is the only prayer,
Thus learn to pray.

time she had discontinued her prayers. Annie Besant believed that "God fades gradually out of the daily life of those who never pray; a God who is not a Providence is a superfluity; when from the heaven does not smile a listening Father, it soon becomes an empty space whence resounds no echo of man's cry".¹

Upto this stage, before meeting Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant called herself a Theist, who tried to the loftier conception of the Divine through her own straightforward and methodical way other than offered by the orthodoxy.

(11) Annie Besant as an Atheist and National Secularist:

It was on the 2nd August, 1874 that Annie Besant met Charles Bradlaugh for the first time and later her union with him made her an active Atheist and a devoted national secularist. Charles Bradlaugh had a depth in his knowledge and language, that Annie Besant was so much impressed by his first lecture that she writes: "I had never before heard eloquence, sarcasm, fire and passion brought to bear on the christian superstition, nor had I ever before felt the sway of the Orator, nor the power that dwells in spoken words".²

A few days after their meeting, Bradlaugh offered

1. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p.87.

2. Ibid, p.90.

Annie Besant a place on the staff of his paper "National Reformer". The first contribution of Annie Besant to the paper appeared in the number for August 30th, 1874, over a nom de guerre of "Ajax". This name was suggested to her by the famous statue of 'Ajax crying for light'. The cry through the darkness for light, even if light brought destruction, was one factor that awoke the keenest sympathy of response from her heart:

"If our fate be death,
Give light, and let us die"¹

Under the influence of Charles Bradlough she delivered her first lecture entitled "The Political Status of Women" at the co-operative Society's Hall, 55, Caste Street on August 25, 1874. The second lecture entitled: "The True Basis of Morality" was delivered on September 27th, 1874.

In January 1875 Annie Besant made up her mind to lecture regularly. On January 17 she spoke on the topic "Civil and Religious Liberty". In the 'National Reformer' of February 14 appeared for the first time a long list of Annie Besant's lecturing engagements. On February 17 she read her paper "The Existence of God" in the Dialectical Society. On February 28 she spoke on the topic "The Gospel of Christianity Vs the Gospel of Free-thought".

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.277.

In 1875 the situation in London, as a result of lectures of Annie Besant, became so inflamed that not only the secularist papers but also the orthodox papers were filled with it. People were wrangling and disputing over Mrs. Annie Besant, who was totally unknown a few months before.

In 1876 were published Annie Besant's few pamphlets, by Thomas Scott, which Annie Besant had written before her joining Bradlaugh's paper. These pamphlets were "The Beauties of the Prayer - Book" Part I, II and III.

In 1876 Annie Besant wrote a tract entitled "constructive nationalism" and a book entitled "The History of the Great French Revolution" (a story of the revolution from the People's point of view). The book on French Revolution was in six lectures which involved a large amount of strenuous labour of the author. In writing this history Annie Besant was compelled to read a large amount of the then current literature of that time and also the great standard histories of Louis Blanc, Michelet and others. Annie Besant writes: Fortunately for me, Mr. Bradlaugh had a splendid collection of works on the subject, and before he left England he brought ot me two cabs full of books, French and English, from all points of view, aristocratic, ecclesiastical, democratic, and I studied these diligently and impartially until the French Revolution became to me as a drama in which I had myself taken part, and the actors

therein became personal friends and foes".¹

In 1877 Annie Besant wrote many tracts and pamphlets. The important ones were as follows: "Giordano Bruno", "The Gospel of Atheism: a lecture", "The Gospel of Christianity and the Gospel of Free-thought", "Is the Bible Indictable"?, "The Law of Population: Its consequences and its bearing upon human conduct and Morals", and "My Path to Atheism".

The article on "Giordano Bruno" was written on 23rd July 1877 in National Reformer, but years later had an entirely unanticipated influence on her past. Annie Besant traced the career of Bruno as a student; Dominican monk and sceptic of Christian and Aristotelian dogmas; he revised Plato and Pythagoras; had disputes in France and England; was persecuted for heresy in Germany, Prague and Italy and was finally burnt as an atheist in 1600 A.D., after being imprisoned for eight years. While writing in 1876 on the philosophy of martyrdom Annie Besant might have cherished that very life of Bruno for herself, but only after thirty years she discovered that Bruno and she herself were one and the same - that in her previous incarnation she had been Bruno.

The essay "Is the Bible Indictable"? was an enquiry whether the Bible comes within the ruling of the Lord Chief

1. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p. 108.

Justice as to be obscene literature. This essay has the ironical list of passages from the Bible, which according to the ruling of the Chief Justice of England against a book on birth control entitled "The Fruits of Philosophy" by Knowlton (published jointly by Annie Besant and Bradlaugh) must be considered obscene.

The essay "Law of Population: Its consequences and its bearing on Human conduct and Morals" was published as a defence of birth control, which Annie Besant wrote as a consequence of the prosecution of herself and of Bradlaugh for circulating Knowlton's 'Fruits of Philosophy', and for which her daughter Mabel was removed from her custody by the Law of England. Fifty thousand copies of the pamphlet "Law of Population" were sold upto 1881 and it was translated into German, Italian, French, Swedish, Dutch and in some of the Indian languages. About her pamphlet "The Law of Population" Annie Besant writes: This little book included a statement of the law, evidence of the serious suffering among the poor caused by over-large families, and a clear statement of the checks proposed, with arguments in their favour."¹

The book 'My Path of Atheism' was a collection of the pamphlets written between 1873 and 1877 by Annie Besant for Thomas Scott, to whom this book is dedicated.

1. Ibid, p.152.

All the pamphlets of 1877 written by Annie Besant were published by the Free-thought Publishing House of which Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh were the sole proprietors. Her publications of 1877 were brief essays comprising of thirteen to sixteen pages each. Annie Besant's interest in philosophy is here seen to have found more definite directions. She criticises the metaphysical arguments and denounces God on atheistic grounds. She makes a reasoned attempt to justify Atheism as a positive creed. She sets out from a species of monism that matter and spirit are only manifestations of one eternal and underived substance that argues that the Deity must necessarily be that eternal and underived substance.

In 1878 Annie Besant wrote "Christian Progress", "English Republicanism", and "The Fruits of Christianity". All these pamphlets dealt with the coarse elements in some Christian hymnals.

In 1879 Annie Besant wrote two small essays: "Marriage: As it was, as it is and as it should be" and "England, India and Afghanistan or why the Tory Government Gags the Indian Press: A plea for the weak against the strong".

The article on 'marriage' was serialised in 'National Reformer', though Annie Besant wrote this article impersonally and never mentioned her own experiences of marriage or situation, it was clear to any reader that she was analysing

the problem with herself in mind. About her article on marriage, Arthur Nethercot writes: "In her pamphlet she briskly reviewed the history of marriage laws from Hebrew and Roman times to the present, when woman was still regarded as a chattel; advocated the passage of a short act ordaining that marriage should in no fashion alter the civil status of a woman as an individual; urged equal rights for men and women in seeking divorce, on grounds of adultery, cruelty, or drunkenness; and took a positive stand against such anomalies as 'judicial separation'".¹

"England, India and Afghanistan" was her first pamphlet dealing with Indian affairs. Like all her pamphlets it also dealt primarily with facts and told in detail, with names and dates, the story of England's past treatment of India and Afghanistan. In this pamphlet Annie Besant protests against England's conduct in India, she writes: "We exploited Hindustan, not for her benefit, but for the benefit of our younger sons, our restless adventures, our quarrelsome and ne'er-do-well surplus population. At least, for the sake of common honesty, let us drop our hypocritical mask, and acknowledge that we seized India from lust of conquest, from greed of gain, from the lowest and paltriest of desires".²

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: First Five Lines of Annie Besant, pp. 142-143.

2. Annie Besant: England, India and Afghanistan, pp. 16-17.

In 1880 Annie Besant wrote "The Ethics of Punishment", and "Landlords, Tenant Farmers and Labourers". In the essay "The Ethics of Punishment" Annie Besant devoted much attention to the problems of crime and punishment.

Towards the end of 1879 Charles Bradlaugh called a conference, which Annie Besant also attended, to consider the question of the reform of the land laws. As a result Annie Besant was able to study various allied social problems and thus wrote her popular pamphlet in 1880 entitled "Landlords, Tenant Farmers and Labourers".

In 1885 Annie Besant wrote her philosophical works entitled "Auguste Comte: His Philosophy, His Religion and his Sociology", "Is Christianity a success?", "Sin and Crime: Their Nature and Treatment", "Women's Position According to the Bible", and "A World without God". From these titles we get a clear idea of Annie Besant's solid grounding in handling the topics of Christianity and the Bible. Between 1879 and 1885 Annie Besant had done a great deal of constructive work and had published practically nothing of a purely destructive literature of anti-religious kind. Now suddenly, she produced a long series of attacks of quite unexpected bitterness.

In her essay "A world without God", Annie Besant writes that "Those of us who find joy in right doing, who work because work is useful to our fellows, who live well because

in such living we pay our contribution to the world's wealth, leaving earth richer than we found it - we need no partly payment after death for our life's labour, for in that labour is its own exceeding great reward".¹ She further writes "To me the thought that the world was in the hands of a God who permitted all the present wrongs and pains to exist would be intolerable, maddening in its hopelessness. There is every hope of righting earth's wrongs and of curing earth's pains if the reason and skill of man which have already done so much are free to do the rest; but if they are to strive against omnipotence, hopeless indeed is the future of the world.....Atheism will utilise, not destroy, the beautiful edifices which once wasted on God, shall hereafter be consecrated for man".²

Apart from the other works of 1885 Annie Besant gave to the world, in that year, her most important work entitled "Autobiographical Sketches". This book gives a detailed record of her mind from her birth upto 1885. This work was published when Annie Besant was still a colleague of Charles Bradlaugh and had not selected the Fabian Society for her passage through Socialism.

Annie Besant joined Fabian Society in 1885 but her old pamphlets were still published in 1886 and 1887 by the

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.258. The reference of the essay 'A world without God' given in the Autobiography.

2. Ibid, pp.266-267,270.

Free-thought Publishing Company owned by Charles Bradlaugh.

In 1886 three important philosophical works of Annie Besant were published: "Life, Death and Immortality", "The Sins of the Church" and "The World and its Gods". These pamphlets show clearly Annie Besant tried to explain the problems of life and mind from the biological point of view. In her essay "Life, Death and Immortality", Annie Besant writes, "Scientifically, life is not an entity but a property; it is not made of existence, but a characteristic of certain modes. Life is the result of an arrangement of matter, when re-arrangement occurs the former result can no longer be present; we call the result of the changed arrangement death. Life and death are two convenient words of expressing the general outcome of two arrangements of matter, one of which is always found to precede the other".¹

In 1887 Annie Besant wrote a small essay entitled, "Why I do not believe in God". In this essay Annie Besant reduced to a physical impossibility, the existence of the Being, described by the Orthodox as a God possessing the attributes of personality. Having thus discussed the notion of a personal God, Annie Besant inquires whether any idea of God can be attained. While summing up this essay, Annie Besant writes: "I do not believe in God. My mind finds no grounds on which to build up a reasonable faith."

1. Ibid, pp.244-245.

My heart revolts against the spectre of an Almighty indifference to the pain of sentient beings. My conscience rebels against the injustice, the cruelty, the inequality, which surround me on every side. But I believe in Man. In man's redeeming power; in man's remoulding energy, in man's approaching triumph, through knowledge, love and work".¹

(iii) Annie Besant as Fabian Socialist:

The upsurge of New Socialism in England had attracted the attention of Annie Besant. At the beginning 1884 she wrote in 'The National Reformer: "What tests 1884 may have for our courage, what strains on our endurance, what trials of our loyalty, none can tell. But this we know - that every test of courage successfully met, every strain of endurance steadily borne, every trial of loyalty nobly surmounted, leaves courage braver, endurance stronger, loyalty truer, than each was before. And therefore, for our own and for the world's sake, I will not wish you, friends, on 1884 in which there shall be no toil and no battling; but I will wish you, each and all, the hero's heart and the Hero's patience, in the struggle for the world's raising, that will endure through the coming year".²

The above written words applied prophetically to Annie Besant's own experiences in 1884 when she could not

1. Ibid, pp.243-244.

2. Besterman Theodore: 'The Mind of Annie Besant', p.56.

continue in her old ways but was inclined towards Socialism. In April 1884, a debate took place between Bradlaugh and Henry M. Hyndman, and here for the first time Annie Besant failed to see eye to eye with Bradlaugh. She met George Bernard Shaw, Henry M. Hyndman, Hubert, Graham Wallas, the Webbs, the Blands and other Fabians.

Annie Besant published a series of articles in 1885 making plain her adhesion to Socialism and her reasons for doing so. In the Pamphlet "The redistribution of Political Power (1885) she traced the results of the Reform Bills of 1832, 1867 and 1884 and also suggested some lines for future progress. The following passage shows the direction of Annie Besant's mind at that time when she wrote this pamphlet. She writes: "There can be no doubt in the minds of reasonable people that a ten hours' day is too long.....The new Parliament should pass an Eight Hours Bill, making the legal day a day of eight hours only, and giving one half-holiday in the week, so that the weekly hours of labour shall not exceed forty-four. In time to come I trust that the hours of labour will be yet further shortened, but the passage of an Eight Hours Bill would mark a good step forward. Looking at the question from a rational point of view, it is surely clear that a human being should not be required to give more than eight hours out of the twenty-four - one-third of his time - for absolute bread-winning. Another seven or eight hours must be given to sleep, leaving eight for

meals, exercise, recreation and study. The last eight are short enough for their varied uses, and I look forward to a time when the first section shall be shortened and the third lengthened; but if every worker had even eight hours of freedom in the day, his life would be a far more human and far more beautiful thing than it is at the present time".¹

In a pamphlet entitled "Why I am a Socialist" (1886) Annie Besant arranges her reasons under three heads: "I am a Socialist because I am a believer in Evolution", "I am a Socialist because of the failure of our present civilization", and must continue to be, an integral part of the present method of wealth - production and wealth - distribution".² The first of these arguments is fully developed in 'The Evolution of Society' (1886) in which there is shown to be progressively evolutionary scheme in the development of society to industrialism and from industrialism to socialism. 'Modern Socialism' (1886) analyses the capitalistic system more closely and offers specific remedies. The evils "can be radically cured only in one way: it is by the substitution of co-operation for competition, of organisation for anarchy in industry".³

In 1884, from every side the socialist controversy grew and Annie Besant heard, read and thought much but said

1. Annie Besant: The Redistribution of Political Power, pp.24-25

2. Annie Besant: Why I am a Socialist , pp.2,4,6.

3. Annie Besant: Modern Socialism, p.27.

practically very little about it. In the same year a highly intellectual socialist, John Hobertson was included in the staff of 'The National Reformer' and thus Annie Besant came into close touch with the actual philosophy and practical side of socialism. To her the case for socialism was intellectually complete and ethically beautiful. Now the trend of Annie Besant's thought was turned towards the social problems such as mid day meals of Board School Children, eight hours work for the factory workers in place of ten hours work, building of hospitals for the poor, work houses for the worn-out creatures etc.

In 1885 the feeling surged so strongly in her heart that Annie Besant sealed her adhesion to socialism by joining the Fabian Society on August, 1885, for which she was for several years one of the leading members.

Annie Besant spoke on her favourite subjects. In 1885 her lecture was 'The Right of Speech', she also wrote on the topic "The Redistribution of Political Power" in 1885. She delivered her speeches on "why I am a Socialist", and the Evolution of Society in 1886. In the same year she wrote her pamphlet entitled "Modern Socialism". In 1887 she delivered her speeches on "Social and Political Action", "Radicalism and Socialism" and "The Socialist Movement". In 1888 her lectures were on "Industry under Socialism", "Why we work for Socialism" and "The Trade Union Movement".

In 1887 a number of early writings were collected in books entitled "Social and Political Essays" and "Essays on Socialism". Annie Besant also took part in public debates with G.W. Foote on "Is Socialism Sound"? in 1887, and with Frederick Miller on "Socialism v. Individualism" in 1889.

The purpose of her lectures was not the study and development of the Socialist thought but its popularization. It is fairly safe to say that she made no permanent contribution to the socialist thought as her stay in the Socialist movement was for a very short time, yet that working class opinion today is so largely and so increasingly socialistic must be attributed in part to the untiring lecture work of Annie Besant in the later eighties. She tried to lessen the breach between socialism and Radicalism. As a socialist she stressed the ideal of the fully developed man, and attacked Industrialism because it destroyed individualism. She toiled to solve practical social issues of her time.

(iv) Annie Besant as a Theosophist:

Upto 1887 Annie Besant was writing on a definite line of denouncing God and retaining a faith in man. But after this year she found full transformation. She did not write anything but kept silent. The cause of this portentous silence can be traced in her autobiography where Annie Besant writes: "Lately there has been dawning on the minds of men far apart in questions of theology, the idea of founding a new Brotherhood, in which service of Man should take the place erstwhile given to service of God -

a brotherhood in which work should be worship and love should be baptism, in which none should be regarded as alien who was willing to work for human good. One day as I was walking towards Millbank Gaol with the Rev. S. D. Headlam, on the way to liberate a prisoner, I said to him: Mr. Headlam, we ought to have a new church, which should include all who have the common ground of faith in and love for man'. And a little later I found that my friend Mr. W. T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, had long been brooding over a similar thought, and wondering whether men 'might not be persuaded to be as earnest about making this world happy as they are over saving their souls'.¹

Annie Besant further writes, "The teaching of social duty, the upholding of social righteousness, the building up of a true commonwealth - such would be among the aims of the church of the future. Is the hope too fair for realization? Is the winning of such beautiful vision yet once more the dream of the enthusiast? But surely the one fact that persons so deeply suffering in theological creeds as those who have been toiling for the last three months to aid and relieve the oppressed, can work in absolute harmony side by side for the one end -- surely this proves that there is a bond which is stronger than our antagonism, a unity which

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, pp. 429-30.

is deeper than the speculative theories which divide".¹

The quotation given above is from the editorial of the paper written by Annie Besant for February 1888 issue clearly which she found some sort of solution of her difficulties.

Theosophy, as Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society and Colonel Olcott, its first president understood it, did not posit any God, like that of the Christians or the Mohammedans and therefore had no open conflict with the atheistic views of Annie Besant. The difference between the atheism and theism consists fundamentally in their respective conception of the Ultimate Reality, which the former considers impersonal and unconscious and the latter believes to be personal and self-conscious. The Theosophy to which Blavatsky and Olcott belonged, held their affinity with the former position, i.e., of atheism. Being inclined to Buddhism they did not believe in the Personality of God but they believed in the unseen, in Soul, in the endless possibilities of Soul and in the right culture in which Soul can sever this chain of Karma and attain Niravana. Thus Theosophy, without demanding of Annie Besant a surrender of her atheism and secularism, offered her an easy way out of the difficulties that occurred in her intellectual

1. Ibid, p.430.

and moral life. Her walk through Atheism into Theosophy was only a transfiguration of her old viewpoints concerning secularism and atheism and not a true conversion into beliefs totally different from what she previously had.¹

In 1889 Annie Besant severed all her relations with her old co-workers and became a Theosophist. She delivered a lecture in 1889 on the subject "why I became a Theosophist" in order to make her old colleagues to understand her transformation. She concluded her lecture in the following words "It has cost me pain enough and to spare to admit that the Materialism from which I hoped all has failed me, and by such admission to bring on myself the disapproval of some of my nearest friends. But here, as at other times in my life, I dare not purchase peace with a lie. An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth, as I see it... That one loyalty to Truth I must keep stainless, whatever friendships fail me or human ties be broken. She may lead me into the wilderness, yet I must follow her; she may strip me of all love, yet I must pursue her; though she slay me, yet will I trust in her; and I ask no other epitaph on my tomb but

"She Tried To Follow Truth"²

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1. Pal, Bipin Chander: Mrs. Annie Besant: A Psychological Study, p.79.
 2. Annie Besant: "Why I became a Theosophist" as noted in her Autobiography, pp.458-459.

Her lectures and pamphlets from 1889 onward mark her great interest in the Theosophical Philosophy. There was no other Theosophical thinker who has contributed so copiously in the field of Theosophy as did Annie Besant. In 1889 her unhesitating plunge into Theosophy made her to give more and more time to intensive study under Madame Blavatsky. In May 1891, Blavatsky suddenly died leaving Annie Besant, writes Geoffrey West, "as her successor in a general capacity, and in particular as chief Secretary in the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and Recorder of the teachings and as Outer Head also of the Esoteric Section".¹ The death of Mme Blavatsky, the honoured friend and chief of Annie Besant, threw so many duties on her that, believing that in Theosophy lay the main hope of a better religious, moral and social order, Annie Besant firmly resolved to leave her affiliation to all the old associates in social work to attend to the higher mission of Theosophical work. In April, 1891 she announced her withdrawal from the different parties and associations.

Writing about Annie Besant's withdrawal, her biographer Arthur H. Nethercot says "This whole change in Annie Besant's orientation had been occasioned by H.P. Blavatsky's removal from the scene. In January she had written a front page article for the STAR, defending

1. West, Geoffrey: 'Mrs. Annie Besant'. p.59.

herself from the charge that in becoming a Theosophist she had ceased to be an active humanitarian and maintaining that Theosophy as taught by Mme Blavatsky imposes on its disciples a life of the external altruism".¹

Colonel Croft, though the President of the Theosophical Society, held, after the death of Blavatsky, merely the hollow title of the President. Annie Besant was the only English Theosophist with a really wide general reputation. Her strong personality, her super human energy and her incessant labours were of great benefit to her. She could be sure, always, of press publicity, of large audience of her lectures. Under her influence Theosophical work spreaded and everywhere gathered force.

The years 1891 and 1892 are perhaps the greatest landmarks in the philosophical development of Annie Besant because in these years were published a flood of her pamphlets and lectures which were only dealing with the Philosophy of Theosophy. The Chief works were "In Defence of Theosophy", "The Sphinx of Theosophy", "Theosophy and Its Evidences", "Theosophy and the Law of Population", "A Rough Outline of Theosophy", "Theosophy", "Theosophy and Christianity", "Theosophy and its Practical Application", "Why You Should be Theosophist", "What Theosophy Is?", "Place of Peace" and "The Seven Principles of Man". In all these pamphlets

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: The First Five Lines of Annie Besant. p.375.

Annie Besant explained the objectives, principles and message of Theosophy to the world.

In 1893 Annie Besant wrote her "Autobiography". This book is an improvement on her "Autobiographical Sketches" which was published in 1885 by the Free Thought Publishing House. Her 'Autobiography' is a detailed study of her life from the very birth to her forty-six years of mature personality. The captions of the chapters of this work reveal her psychological and philosophical bent of mind. The first chapter of this book, dealing with her birth, bears the title "Out of the Everywhere into the Here" which is a line from the mystic poet George Macdonald's popular poem "Baby". The last chapter of her autobiography depicts the historic scene of her walk through atheism into Theosophy and holds the caption "Through Storm to Peace". Her autobiography is a very important document for understanding her life and development. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar writes about her "Autobiography" in these words: It is a gospel of undaunted courage and unflinching integrity and like the confessions of St. Augustine and other great biographies in literature, that book narrates the struggle of a great soul, from darkness to light, according to its vision of light and darkness".¹

From 1893 to 1907, before becoming the President of the

1. Aiyar, Sir C.P. Ramaswami: "Dr. Besant as a Comrade and a Leader. p.3.

Theosophical Society, Annie Besant toured India, America, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and the continent and delivered lectures, wrote pamphlets, tracts and books, edited journals and newspapers concerning Theosophy and explaining its more wide boundaries to the world than were provided by Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott and other earlier writers of this new religion. She brought out a flood of reading material which was widely circulated all over the globe. The chief titles of her works of that period are noted as follows:

- 1894: "An Introduction to Theosophy", "The Building of Kosmos and other Lectures" "The Meaning and the Use of Pain".
- 1895: "The Birth and Evolution of the Soul", "Devotion and the Spiritual Life", "In the Outer Court", "Karma", "The Masters as Facts and Ideals", "The Pilgrimage of the Soul", "The Self and Its Sheaths", "Theosophy and Its Teachings", and "The Use of Evil".
- 1896: "Man and his Bodies".
- 1897: "The Ancient Wisdom": "An Outline of Theosophical Teachings", "Four Great Religions", and "The Three Paths to Union with God".
- 1898: "Esoteric Christianity", "The Hidden Side of Religion", and "Occultism, Semi-Occultism, Pseudo Occultism".
- 1899: "Dharma" and "Evolution of Life and Form".
- 1900: "Avatars".

- 1901: "Death and After" and "Thought Power: Its control culture".
- 1902: "Theosophy and Imperialism".
- 1903: "The Laws of Higher Life", "Proofs of the Existence and the Soul" and "England and India".
- 1904: "Hindu Ideals", "Life and Life after Death", "Modern Science and Higher Self", "The Necessity of Reincarnation", "The Pedigree of Man", "Reincarnation, a Christian Doctrine", "The Secret of Evolution", "A Study of Consciousness", "Theosophy and the New Psychology", and "When a Man Dies shall He Live Again?".
- 1905: "Theosophy in Relation to Human Life" and "The Work of theosophy in the World".
- 1906: "Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad Gita" and "The Perfect Man".

These publications deal with the philosophical aspects of Annie Besant's thought and are of enduring significance because they explain her theory of spiritual evolution and her views on consciousness, reincarnation, Karma, Self, Thought-Power, Pain, Evil, Life, Death, Birth, Soul, God, Dharma, Avatars etc. Since the above mentioned books and their import have been extensively quoted in subsequent chapters any detailed discussion of them is out of place here.

In 1907 after the death of Colonel Olcott, the first founder-President of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant

became, in fact and as well as in spirit, the President of the Society.

After becoming the President of the Theosophical Society the flood of publications from her pen abated and her lecturing and touring activities widened. Therefore from 1907 to 1933, her last year of life, most of the works are from her lectures which she delivered for Theosophical Lodges in different parts of the World, addresses of the Annual Conventions of the Theosophical Society and speeches made in the Queen's Hall London and other places all over the world.

From 1907 onwards Annie Besant published:

- 1907: "London Lectures of 1907", "The Wisdom of the Upanishads",
- 1908: "Australian Lectures".
- 1909: "The Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students".
- 1910: "Popular Lectures on Theosophy" and "Reincarnation".
- 1911: "The Immediate Future and Other Lectures", "The Riddles of Life and How Theosophy Answers it", "The Value of Devotion", and "The Ideals of Theosophy".
- 1912: "Initiation: The Perfecting of Man", "An Introduction to the Science of Peace", "The Law of Action and Reaction", "Man's Life in This and the Other Worlds", "The Masters and the Way to Them", "The Opening of the New Cycle", "The Spiritual Life", and "A Study in Karma".

- 1913: "Evolution and Occultism", "An Introduction to Yoga", "Investigation into the Super Physical", and "The Spirit Who is Man and the Spiritual Life".
- 1914: "The Inner Purpose of the Theosophical Society", "Mysticism", "Spiritual Life for the Man of the World", and "A Word on Man, His Nature and His Power".
- 1915: "The Basis of Morality", and "Reincarnation: Its Necessity".
- 1916: "The Bearing of Religious Ideals on Social Reconstruction", "Psychic and Spiritual Development", "Theosophy and Life's Deeper Problems" and "A World Religion".
- 1917: "Duties of the Theosophists", and "The Mysteries".
- 1918: "Nature's Finer Forces", and "The Search For Happiness".
- 1919: "In Defence of Hinduism", Is Belief in the Masters Superstitious or Harmful?", "Life After Death", "Man's Life in Three Worlds", "Occultism", "Problems of Reconstruction", and "Study and Practice".
- 1920: "The Inner Government of the World", and "The Protestant Spirit".
- 1921: "The Great Plan", "Karma and Social Improvement", "The Nature of Theosophical Proofs", "On Karma", "Reincarnation: Its Answers to Life's Problems", "Religion and Music", "Talks with a Class", and "Theosophy: Its Meaning and Its Value".

- 1922: "Theosophical Christianity", and "Real and the Unreal".
- 1923: "Theosophy, the Interpreter" and "Brahmavidya".
- 1924: "Theosophy as the Basic Unity of National Life", "Progress of the Theosophical Society", "The Real and the Unreal in Nation's Life", and "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys".
- 1925: "The Theosophical Society and the Occult Hierarchy", "The Three World Movements", "World Problems of Today" and "Indian Ideals in Education, Religion and Philosophy, and Art (Kamala Lectures of 1925)".
- 1926: "Talks on the Path of Occultism" and "How a World Teacher Comes".
- 1927: "Some American Lectures" and "The New Civilization".
- 1928: "Theosophy, Past and Present".
- 1929: "The Future of Theosophical Society".
- 1930: "Indian Ideals".

We now come to a brief review of the Philosophical Works of Annie Besant after her election as the President of the Theosophical Society. All her publications, after 1907, are her lectures. These reflect her philosophy and indicate the general trends of her thought as they took shape from time to time. In her later works the influence of Hindu philosophy is very predominant because she weaves her philosophical thought on Hindu Viewpoints and freely

quotes the Upanishads, Bhagvad-Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata and the other Hindu epics in her lectures and writings and she develops her metaphysical and ethical concepts on them.

In most of her works we find a great duplicacy of ideas. This defect of repetitions is generally found in her lectures because she was not a cold armchair intellectual like Karl Marx or a contemplative philosopher like Hegel absorbed in visions of abstract truth, but she was a strong willed practical thinker like Gandhi, prone to quick, unhesitating decision and having a definite message for the world - Annie Besant was in reality a devoted true Karmayogin. Because Annie Besant had to make tours of the whole of the world, to deliver her practical thoughts and influence always a new audience by her lectures, therefore some repetition had to occur in her printed lectures. On the whole, it is enough to remark that her works, may they be earlier or later, concern with the most obtruse problems of life which she treated in a lucid and interesting manner and provided a food for thought to every philosophical mind.

Annie Besant has written much on Education. So far as the import of this dissertation is to understand Annie Besant's educational thought, so it will not be out of place to mention here the titles of books, written by Annie Besant, covering the educational topics. The books are:-
1874: "On the Religious Education of Children".
1885: "Autobiographical Sketches", and "The Redistribution of Political Powers".

- 1886: "The Evolution of Society".
- 1893: "Annie Besant: An Autobiography".
- 1895: "The Means of India's Regeneration" and "The Use of Evils".
- 1898: "Individuality", and "Emotion, Intellect & Spirituality".
- 1900: "Some Problems of Life".
- 1901: "Ancient Ideals in Modern Life".
- 1903: "Education as a National Duty".
- 1904: "Education of Indian Girls", "Hindu Ideals", and "Sanatana Dharma: An Advanced Text-Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics".
- 1908: "The Necessity For Religious Education", and "Education as the Basis of National Life".
- 1909: "On the Education of the Depressed Classes".
- 1910: ""Transactions of the Education Conference of 1910".
- 1911: "Psychology", "The Universal Text-Book of Religion and Morals", "Meaning and Methods of Spiritual Life", and "Essays and Addresses".
- 1912: "Education in the Light of Theosophy", "Social Problems", "The Message of Theosophy" and "The Ideals of Theosophy".
- 1913: "The Protection of Children", "Wake up India: A Plea for Social Reform", "Wake up India", and "India".
- 1914: "The Crisis in National Education" and "India and the Empire".

- 1915: "India: "A Nation", "The Future of Young India", and "How India Wrought for Freedom".
- 1916: "Bearing of Religious Ideals on Social Reconstruction", "Preparation for Citizenship", "Social Service" and "Theosophy and Life's Deeper Problems".
- 1917: "The Theosophical Education Trust (Report of 1916)", "The Indian Education Trust", "The Ancient Indian Ideal of Duty", "The Birth of New India", "Congress Speeches", and "For India's Uplift".
- 1918: "The Principles of Education", "National Education" and "The Place of Religion".
- 1919: "Education For the New Era", and "Problems of Reconstruction".
- 1921: "Presidential Address in First Reform Conference", "Great Plan", and "Theosophy and the World Problems".
- 1922: "Theosophy and World Problems".
- 1923: "The School Boy as Citizen" and "Social Reform".
- 1924: "Higher Education in India - Past and Present", and "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys".
- 1925: "Indian Ideals in Education, Religion and Philosophy, and Art (Kamla Lectures)", and "World Problems of Today".
- 1926: "India: Bond or Free".

Magazines edited by Annie Besant for children and school-college going students:

1. "Central Hindu College Magazine", a monthly magazine about the activities of the Central Hindu College, published from Benaras, first appeared in 1900.
2. "The Young Citizen", a monthly magazine for young people, published from Adyar, first appeared in April, 1923.

(B)

Environmental Factors which Shaped Annie Besant's Philosophy

Every thinker is a product of his environmental conditions in which he lives and works. Annie Besant cannot be an exception to this truth. Her own education, her association with some intellectual luminaries of her time, her thorough study of books and authors, her personal sufferings and her success of the early experiments -- all these factors had gone a long way in shaping her individuality and philosophical personality. Here in this brief portion of this chapter our main aim is to discuss cursorily, with the help of her own views, the different facets of her dramatic life so as to understand her philosophic personality in a clear form.

(1) Formal Education: Annie's formal education had been quite sketchy as she was neither admitted into any academic institution upto her eighth year of life and nor her mother was very particular in sending her to any school. Annie's mother had made some definite plans of the education of Annie's elder brother Henry, elder to Annie by two years only,

and for his good future and proper schooling she had severed her all relations with the "Wood" family, left the ancestral house and gone to Harrow to provide best education possible by her. When Miss Marryat, a lady famous for her genius for teaching, herself requested Annie's mother to allow Annie to be educated with her niece but Annie's mother demurred. After a good deal of persuasion Annie's mother yielded. Writing on this incident Annie Besant says: "It was urged upon her (Annie's mother) that the advantages of education offered were such as no money could purchase for for me; that it would be a disadvantage for me to grow up in a house full of boys - and in truth, I was as good a cricketer and climber as the best of them - that my mother would soon be obliged to send me to school, unless she accepted an offer which gave me every advantage of school without its advantages. At last she yielded, and it was decided that Miss Marryat, on returning home, should take me with her".¹

G.M.Williams, Annie Besant's biographer, describes the non-educational attitude of Annie's mother towards her daughter's academic future in not accepting the offer of Miss Marryat, brought a psychological conflict in Annie which caused, "a growing jealousy of her brother, this casual male who took her mother's every sacrifice for granted".²

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography. p.133

2. Williams, Gertrude Marvin: The Passionate Pilgrim - p.10.

But there is no recorded evidence showing any discord between Annie Besant and her mother for her rejecting the offer of Miss Marryat.

The true fact, in not agreeing to the offer of Miss Marryat, is that in the England of the early nineteenth century the women education was not popular in orthodox Roman Catholic families so, Annie's mother, who herself had not received any academic education, was not particular about her daughter's academic progress.

Annie's teacher, Miss Ellen Marryat was the youngest sister of the famous novelist Captain Frederick Marryat, who was an author of many popular stories for children. Miss Marryat, who herself was lame, looked around for the service of the world through teaching. In 1855 Miss Marryat saw pretty Annie in a house of Annie's new neighbour and decided to take Annie as a companion of her niece in studies. So after her mother's approval Annie went to live for seven years with "Auntie" as Miss Marryat wanted the children to call her. Miss Marryat took greatest delight in teaching and from time to time she added new children to her party, sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl. She chose these proteges who "must be gently born and gently trained",¹ and of those Annie was one. It was the habit of Miss Marryat to find out and help those only "on whom poverty presses most heavily, when the need for education for the children

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.134.

weighs on the proud and the poor"¹.

Young Annie was very fortunate as to come under the care of Miss Marryat, who had a system of education which at that time was highly unorthodox. Miss Marryat's system of education not only moulded young Annie's character, but also had later a great influence when the one time pupil came to formulate her own educational theories and certain regulations into the conduct of the policy of central Hindu College Benaras and other institutions in India.

Miss Marryat taught everything except music, for which she had engaged a music master. She taught composition, recitation, reading aloud English, French and German and devoted herself in training the children in the most sound fashion. Miss Marryat's training left a great impact on Annie Besant.

The methods of teaching of Miss Marryat were very progressive as she believed in the principle of learning by doing and not by memorization. She taught with love and gave least pain to the children and made her lessons most enjoyable. She did not believe in teaching spelling or grammar directly, but make the children write letter to each other describing the things they had seen in their walks or retell a story already read. Miss Marryat read aloud the compositions of the children and corrected the faults of spelling, grammar

1. Loc.Cit.

and of style. She also read aloud the clumsy sentences which seemed unmusical in sound and made the children observe their errors.

Annie Besant describes how Miss Marryat brought out the faculty of observation in her charges. "'O, dear I have nothing to say ' would come from a small child, hanging over a slate. 'Did you not go out for a walk yesterday?' Auntie would question. 'Yes', would be sighed out but there's nothing to say about it'. 'Nothing to say. And you walked in the lanes for an hour and saw nothing, little No-eyes? You must use your eyes better today'".¹

Some further details of Miss Marryat's educational ideas deserve a full quotation while explaining her excellent way of teaching spelling. Annie Besant writes, "We used to write our lists of all the words we could think of which sounded the same but were differently spelt. Thus: "key, quay", "knight, night" and so on, and great was the glory of the child who found the largest number. Our French lessons - as the German later - included reading from the very first. On the day on which we began German reading Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" and the verbs given to us to copy out were those that had occurred in the reading. We learned much by heart, but always things that in themselves were worthy to be learned. We were never given the dry questions and answers which lazy teachers so much affect".²

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.135.

2. Loc.Cit.

Miss Marryat gave education for fulness. She taught boys as well as girls the use of the needle. She taught Geography by painting skelton maps, putting together puzzle maps in which countires in the map of a continent, or countries in the map of a country were always cut out in their proper shape. The only grammar that Annie learnt was the grammar of Latin, and the ruler of the grammar were learnt only through composition. Miss Marryat believed that grammar should not be taught but caught. The Latin grammar was mainly used as the basis because Latin was considered more perfect and solid as the foundation for modern languages. Explaining how Miss Marryat fostered the healthy habit of clear thought and expression, Annie Besant writes: "Auntie had a great horror of children learning by rote things they did not understand, and then fancying they knew them.

"What do you mean by that expression, Annie? she would ask me.

After feeble attempts to explain, I would answer: Indeed, Auntie, I know in my head, but I can't explain".

Then, indeed, Annie, you do not know in your head, or you could explain, so that I might know in my own head"¹.

In Miss Marryat's school no books were taught or read, on the Sunday, except the Bible. The students of Marryat schoo were to teach in the Sunday School started by Miss Marryat.

1. Annie Besant: Auto-biographical sketches: p.17.

She believed that it was useless for students to learn if they did not try to help those who had no one to teach them.

Annie Besant writing about Sunday Schools of Miss Marryat says: "The Sunday-school lessons had to be carefully prepared on the Saturday, for we were always taught that work given to the poor should be work that cost something to the giver. This principle regarded by her as an illustration of the text, "shall I give the Lord my God that which has cost me nothing?" ran through all her precept and her practice. When in some public distress we children went to her crying, and asking whether we could not help the little children who were starving, her prompt reply was, "what will you give up for them?" And then she said if we liked to give up the use of sugar, we might thus each save six pence a week to give away. I doubt if a healthier lesson can be given to children than that of personal self-denial for the good of others.¹

In Miss Marryat's home the children experienced a plenty of freedom. After studying the lessons the children used to have amusement in the form of long walks, rides, picnics in the lovely country round Charmouth and Miss Marryat always joined them. She wanted to see children making progress not only mentally but also physically.

From the age of eight the education of Annie Besant

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, pp.137-38.

accented the religious side of her character. Under Miss Marryat's training her religious feeling received a strong Evangelical bent, but she could not be 'converted' to the religion of her tutor. Miss Marryat had started a Sunday School and a Bible class for the children too old for the school. The children learnt by heart many hymns and passages from the Bible, and Annie excelled in those lessons, she writes "I had an uneasy sense that I was often praised for my piety when emulation and vanity were more to the front than religion; as when I learned by heart the Epistle of James, for more to distinguish myself for my memory than from any love for the text itself."¹

In the spring of 1861 Miss Marryat made an important innovation in her educational routine that she announced her intention of going abroad. Miss Marryat taught German for some months as she thought it wise to know the language of the country fairly well before visiting that country. French had already been learnt and practice was made during dinner. But when the party actually reached Bonn the students of Miss Marryat could not understand a word of the luggage-porters.

Annie Besant's experiences in Bonn were not satisfactory. About Miss Marryat, she writes: Dear Auntie was a

1. Ibid, pp.141-142.

maiden lady, looking on all young men as wolves to be kept far from her growing lambs?"¹ Bonn University was just then experiencing a sort of Anglophilia and the charges of Miss Marryat gave the University students an excellent opportunity to pursue it. Annie and the other girls were followed around by mischievous German youths wherever they went. After bearing the torture for three months and fearing for their morals Miss Marryat sent both the girls back to England for the holidays, somewhat in disgrace. But Annie would never forget that tour as she writes "lovely excursions during those months; such clambering up mountains, such rows on the swift-flowing Rhine, such wanderings in exquisite valleys.....the Rhine at the foot of Drachenfels, or the soft, mist-veiled island."²

After two months stay in England Annie rejoined Miss Marryat in Paris, where they spent seven "happy, useful months". On Wednesdays and Saturdays they were free from lessons. They spent much of their time in galleries of the Louvre, and became familiar with the masterpieces of art. During their weekly wanderings they visited almost every church in Paris. Annie's favourite church was St. Germain de l'Auxerrois. They found delight in mingling with the bright crowd on the Champs Elysees and the Bois.

1. Ibid, p.145.

2. Ibid. p.146.

On their return from the Continent Miss Marryat took the girls to Sidmouth in Devonshire for the summer of 1862. She was a wise woman and she had realized that the girls were passing their middle teens, so Miss Marryat began giving them freedom. The girls were trained more and more to work alone so as to become independent for the proper adjustment in the world. Miss Marryat withdrew her constant supervision and teaching so that the girls may not be bewildered by their unaccustomed freedom but little by little they may be trained to work alone.

During the winter of 1862-63 Miss Marryat stayed in London and Annie remained with her, attending the admirable classes of M. Roche. In the spring Annie returned home as Miss Marryat had told her, writes Annie Besant "that she thought all she could usefully do was done, and that it was time that I should try my wings alone".¹ Annie came back to Harrow, at the age of sixteen and a half, to live with her mother.

Miss Marryat's teaching put a remarkable influence on Annie Besant, she writes, "No words of mine can tell how much I owe her, not only of knowledge, but of that love of knowledge which has remained with me ever since as a constant spur of study."²

1. Ibid, p.150.

2. Ibid, p.134.

But the story of Annie Besant's formal education is not complete here. The love of knowledge with which she was introduced by Miss Marryat did not subside after her return from her. She studied books regularly throughout her difficult times of married life and afterwards when she worked with Charles Bradlaugh for his paper and political life in England.

Mrs. Annie Besant's husband, Rev. Frank Besant, filed a petition in Chancery on 9 April 1879 charging his wife of propagating the principles of Atheism by her addresses, lectures, writings and books which would be detrimental to his daughter, Mabel's morals and happiness if to be left in her mother's charge. On 29 April, 1879 the case was decided against Annie Besant and Mabel was legally snatched away from her on some defined terms of Annie Besant's future relationships with her own children. This case totally upset Annie and in order to get mental poise she wanted to keep herself engaged more in some tuff work. She started her studies for matriculating from the London University with a view to relieve her from her mental tensions gained from her domestic troubles. She explains herself "here let me say to any one in mental trouble, that they might find an immense relief on taking up some intellectual recreation of this kind; during this pering; in addition to my ordinary work of writing, lecturing and editing - and the lecturing

meant travelling from one end of England to the other - I translated a fair-sized French Volume, and had the wear-and-tear of pleading my case for the custody of my daughter in the court of Appeal.....I found it the very greatest relief to turn to algebra, geometry, and physics, and forget the harassing legal struggles in wrestling with formulae and problems".¹

Annie Besant's wish to pass the Matriculation examination of the London University clearly shows that she was not satisfied with her academic qualifications. Though her private schooling under Miss Marryat had set her on the right lines, she had been essentially self-educated. Never had she attended any formal class in an academic institution. But when the custody case was decided against her, she made an important decision which was to start her off on a fresh career.

Early in January 1878 the Convocation of London University had passed a new supplemental charter to admit women to its degrees. This new educational opportunity for women, coupled with Annie's own recent researches in law and medicine, offered an irresistible challenge to Annie Besant. In the February 1879 issue of the Magazine Charles Bradlaugh inserted a prominent note: "Mrs. Besant, thinking it may add to her usefulness to the cause, intends to try to take advantage of the opportunity afforded for women obtaining

1. Ibid, p.345.

degrees in the London University. The necessary studies in preparation for the very severe examination will occupy so much of her time that for many months to come she will be able to lecture only on Saturday and Sunday".¹

In 1879 Annie Besant met Edward B. Aveling, A D.Sc. of London University who was a marvellously able teacher of scientific subjects. He was very clear and accurate in his knowledge, enthusiastic in his love of science and took great pleasure in imparting his knowledge to others.

Annie Besant became a pupil of Dr. Aveling who encouraged her to matriculate in June 1879. She passed her Teachers' examination at the South Kensington branch of the University. Her biographer, Arthur H. Nethercot, writes: "Her studies were not only of remarkable diversity but of a most unfeminine nature. In the examination of 1880, for example, she was rated "First class" in Organic Chemistry, mathematics, theoretical mechanics, magnetism and electricity, botany, general biology, animal physiology, and acoustics, science, she took top honours in botany, advanced physiology, mathematics, and advanced chemistry".²

Her attainments in the examinations were so impressive that she was asked to teach the course of elementary animal physiology in the autumn of 1880. Annie Besant's triumphant career continued into 1881. But its imperfection

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: First Five Lives of Annie Besant, p.156

2. Ibid., p.186.

was now marred slightly by two "second divisions". In South Kensington examinations Annie Besant made "first divisions" in advanced botany and advanced animal physiology but "only seconds" in advanced mathematics and advanced chemistry. In preparing for the matriculation and the other examinations Dr. Aveling was the sole tutor of Annie Besant.

Annie Besant, was very proud of her being the only candidate in the whole of England who had been given honours in her Botany examination and the great scientist Thomas Huxley who had been one of her examiners, applied through Dr. Aveling for permission to use the Royal Botanical Garden in Regent's Park for her further studies in Botany. The Curator of the Botanical Garden rejected the application in horror on the ground that he could not expose his daughters, to Annie Besant, who often used the garden. After all fifty thousand copies of the most controversial book of Annie Besant "Law of Population" were sold to the public of England.

A little later the Birkbeck Institute, where Annie Besant had attended a class in electricity, omitted her name from the list of successful candidates at the South Kensington examinations. Taking the omission of her name accidental, Annie Besant inquired about the error and was told that the members of the Committee have purposely omitted her name because they were collecting money for a building fund, feared that some of the contributors may not withdraw

if they found that she had been allowed to attend one of its classes. Even in May 1883 Annie Besant's application for admission to the practical Botany class at University College, was rejected. Her biographer writes: "The winner of the only honours award in botany in England was refused",¹ when she had sent a letter of application, the secretary and the Lady Superintendent of the University College informed her insultingly that she could not be admitted because there was some prejudice against her. Even the council of the college itself endorsed the rejection.

Annie Besant, fighting madely for her rejection, circulated a petition, prepared by Aveling, asking the Council to summon an extra-ordinary meeting to reconsider its action, and got several important professors and doctors, including Thomas Huxley, to sign it. The University College Senate took action in support of the position of the Council.

The meeting of the Council, which was held late in July 1883, listened attentively and politely to Mrs. Besant's resolution proving that their recent action was contradictory to the fundamental principles of the college. In that Council only nine members voted for her. Her supported friend and teacher Thomas Huxley, recently elected president of Royal Society, was not one of these. Huxley did not vote at all.

Annie Besant, commenting over the decision of the Council, wrote in her paper: "They have probably made it

1. Ibid., 191.

impossible for me to take degree this year, but they have not the power to shut me together".¹ Annie Besant was hopeful to graduate from London University which was a more liberal University.

But it was practical chemistry in which Annie Besant failed thrice. She passed her First B.Sc. and Preliminary Science Examinations at London University very easily. Her failure in practical Chemistry puzzled her since she had passed a far more difficult practical chemical examination for teachers at South Kensington. In explaining the cause of her failure, Jinarajadasa writes "There was one examiner in the University who told her beforehand that however brilliantly she might do the papers which were set, he would not pass her, because he had a strong antipathy towards her atheism and to certain of her activities for the masses, which he considered immoral;"² so she could not take her degree and her ambition of passing the examination of Bachelor of Medicine after B.Sc. remained unfulfilled.

Only an experienced psychologist can properly reveal that how it became possible by Annie Besant, who was rejected by the Orthodox Academic World of England in 1883, to found a college of her own in India, after only one and a half decade, where she framed her own rules, applied her own

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1. Noted by Arthur H. Nethercot in his book 'First Five Lives of Annie Besant', p.192.
 2. Jinarajadasa, C: 'The Diamond Soul of Annie Besant' an article in the Annie Besant Centenary Book, pp.4-5.

principles, promulgated her own regulations in the conduct of its policy, and fulfilled her unfulfilled desire of getting a higher degree, more higher than that which she could ever get in England.

(2) The Influence of Some Persons

It is not an easy task to determine the extent of the influence of some persons on the genesis of Annie Besant's philosophy. It might form an interesting topic of a separate investigation. It would be enough to say that Annie Besant's associations were so wide-ranged, her affiliations so numerous, the age in which her thought matured so vibrant with currents and cross-currents of ideas of eminent men and women of divergent opinions and Annie Besant's own nature so restless and always striving for new outlets for expression, that an adequate estimate of all those luminaries, who shed their beacon lights for illumining the developing thought of Annie Besant, would hardly be an easier matter. Bernard Shaw was correct when he wrote about Annie Besant that "Mrs. Besant is a woman of swift decisions. She sampled many movements and societies before she finally found herself; and her transitions were not gradual; she always came into a movement with a bound, and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken".¹

1. Shaw, Bernard: 'Annie Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism', an article in the pamphlet "Dr. Annie Besant: Fifty Years in Public Work". p.3.

All that we can do here is to write in brief some descriptions of the persons, in the light of Annie Besant's biography, who influenced her in the passage of her development.

(i) Parents of Annie Besant: The available evidence suggests that Annie Besant belonged to a mediocre family and possessed affectionate and devoted parents during the early years of her life, but only after a peaceful life of five years, her father died and thus the tragedy of her life started.

Annie Besant's mother was a woman of firm resolutions and by dint of her hard labour and courage she did not make it possible for the young children to feel the void of the absence of the father. Writing about the high character of her mother, Annie Besant says: "My darling mother certainly 'spoiled' me, so far as were concerned all the small roughness of life. She never allowed a trouble of any kind to touch me, and cared only that all worries should fall on her, all joys on me. I know now that I never dreamed then, that her life was one of serious anxiety".¹

(ii) Miss Ellen Marryat: Hardly Annie was of eight years that Miss Marryat took her to Fern Hill, near Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, where she remained for more than seven years under Miss Marryat's able guidance. Annie Besant's early

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.152.

education received an Evangelical bent, through Miss Marryat's influence, as she learnt by heart many parts of the Old and the New Testament. Young Annie took her religion in strenuous fashion like any young child who has an impressionable age and strict Evangelical influence. Young Annie was a strict orthodox christian but Annie Besant of mature age laughed at the christian dogmas like a non-believer and a staunch atheist. Therefore it can be hardly said that there existed any clear influence of her childhood belief on her mature philosophical mind. On the contrary most of her philosophical and social ideas originated during her mature years of life as a result of her thorough study and experiments to grapple with the problems of life.

The principles and methodology of education which Annie Besant learnt at the feet of Miss Marryat had put considerable influence over Annie Besant's whole life and made possible for her to take up educational work in the Hall of Science of Dr. Aveling and later on in the Central Hindu College in India. Annie Besant, admiring the methodology of teaching of Miss Marryat says: "Her method of teaching may be of interest to some, who desire to train children with the least pain, and the most enjoyment to the little ones themselves".¹ Miss Marryat visited the poor, sent food from her own table to the sick and the needy was characteristic

1. Ibid., p.134.

of her. The lessons of humanism learnt from Miss Marryat had gone a long way with Annie Besant when she took up educational, social and political work with great fervour in England and India.

(iii) William Prowting Roberts: In the initial stages of her life, before leaving the harbourage of girlhood to set sail on the troublous sea of her life, Annie was influenced by Mr. Roberts "the poor man's lawyer", who was always ready to fight a poor Man's case without fee and to champion any worker unfairly dealt with. He worked hard in the agitation which saved women from working in the mines. Mr. Roberts used to narrate to Annie "how he had seen them (women) toiling, naked to the waist with short petticoats, barely reaching to their knees, rough; foul-tongued, brutalized out of all womanly decency and grace; and how he had seen little children working there too, babies of three and four set to watch a door, and falling asleep at their work to be roused by curse and kick to the unfair toil",¹ while narrating such like pathetic sights the old man's eyes would begin to flash, his voice to rise and then his face would soften with a relief as the slavery was put to an end. This old lawyer was Annie's 'first tutor in Radicalism'. Young Annie regarded

1. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p.37.

the poor as folk to be educated, looked after, charitably dealt with and always to be treated with most perfect courtesy. "But to Mr. Roberts", writes Annie Besant, "the poor were the working-bees, the wealth producers, with a right to self-rule, not to looking after, with a right to justice, not to charity".¹ Mr. Roberts praised John Bright very much for his work and speeches which he made for the emancipation of the poor and the slaves.

With a close association of Mr. Roberts and his family young Annie learnt the cause of the poor people which put a deep impression on her and made her to be regardful to the poor and the oppressed in her whole life.

(iv) W - D -: The serious illness of the children of Annie Besant in 1872 caused a feeling of angry resentment against God in her mind. Her husband, thinking himself incapable in helping her, brought a clergyman to whom Annie Besant identified only as "Mr. W - D - "as she thought it best to suppress his full name for fear she would injure him. Annie Besant writes about this clergyman "whose wider and more liberal views of Christianity exercised much influence over me during the months of struggle".²

First day, when this clergyman met Annie Besant, he spoke very little but sent a kind letter reconciling

1. Ibid. p. 38.

2. Ibid. p. 50.

Annie Besant to her sufferings. His arguments concerning the mystery of pain and God's duties were totally orthodox but his letter gave Annie Besant a moral support. Mr. W - D wrote a large number of letters to Annie Besant in which he discussed all the sceptical questions and allied problems. This correspondence encouraged Annie Besant's confidence but the letters of Mr. W - D - could not persuade Annie Besant out of her problems and finally mental dissatisfaction broke her health and thus ended the correspondence between Annie Besant and Mr. W - D - .

(v) Rev. Charles Voysey: Annie Besant was influenced by Rev. Charles Voysey when she was being tossed on storms of spiritual doubt and finally felt the need to free herself from the crude forms of Christian thought, rigidly held then by orthodox Christians as a part of Christ's teaching.

Rev. Charles Voysey, a clergyman of the church of England who, encouraged by Charles Bradlaugh to fight the established Church of England, had been expelled by his church for advance opinions on Christianity, held preachings at the Theistic Church. When Annie Besant listened for the first time to the sermons preached by Rev. Voysey in St. George Hall she felt with satisfaction "that there were people who had passed through my own difficulties, and had given up the dogmas that I found so revolting".¹ Annie Besant went

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography. p.203.

again on the following Sunday and was moved by a strong desire to speak to Mr. Voysey who had struggled out the Christian difficulties. Next Sunday Annie Besant was again at that Hall, she met Mrs. and Mr. Voysey and writes about them, "I found that their Theism was free from the defects that have revolted me in Christianity, and they opened up to me new views of religion. I read Theodore Parker's "Discourse on Religion", Francis Newman's works, those of Miss Frances Power Cobbe, and of others; the anguish of the tension relaxed; the nightmare of an Almighty Evil passed away; my belief in God, not yet touched, was cleared from all the dark spots that had sullied it, and I no longer doubted whether the dogmas that had shocked my conscience were true or false. I shook them off, once for all, with all their pain and horror and darkness, and felt, with joy and relief inexpressible, that they were delusions of the ignorance of man, not the revelations of a God".¹

Voysey's preachings gave Annie Besant much relief but she was not able to find any satisfactory answer to her revolts concerning the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Voysey's preachings emphasized the humanity of Christ at the expense of His Deity but when the eternal punishment

1. Ibid. p.204.

and the substitutionary atonement had gone there seemed no reason to Annie Besant to account for so tremendous a miracle as the incarnation of the Deity. In the course of her study of religions Annie Besant had become familiar with the ideas of Avatars in Indian creeds and she saw that the incarnate God was put forward as a fact by all ancient religions and thus her knowledge of the Indian philosophy and religions paved a way for challenging the especially Christian teaching, when the doctrines morally repulsive were cleared away by Voysey's preachings. But Annie Besant shrank from the thought of disbelieving a doctrine so dear to her from all the associations of her past, she writes: "There was so much that was soothing and ennobling in the idea of a union between Man and God, between a perfect man and a Divine life, between a human heart and an Almighty strength. Jesus as God was interwoven with all art and all beauty in religion; to break with the Deity of Jesus was to break with music, with painting, with literature; with Divine Babe in His Mother's arms; the Divine Man in His Passion and His Triumph; the Friend of Man encircled with the majesty of the Godhead. Did inexorable Truth demand that this ideal Figure, with all its pathos, its beauty its human love, should pass away into the Pantheon of the dead Gods of the Past?"¹

1. Ibid. p.205.

Annie Besant struggled to know the truth. She tried to give up her belief in Christ as God, but with it she had also to give up Christianity as a creed. When once she challenged the unique position of the Christ, the name Christian seemed to her to be a hypocrisy, and its renouncement a duty binding on the upright mind like that of her. She tried to solve this riddle in her meetings with Voysey but with no result. Annie Besant herself tried, as she writes, "to carefully review the evidence for and against the Deity of Christ, with the result that that belief followed the others, and I stood, no longer Christian, face to face with a dim future."¹

Annie Besant's acquaintance with Voysey grew into friendship which made Voysey to edit and write prefaces of Annie Besant's two free-thought pamphlets entitled "On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth" and "According to St. John".

Voysey also edited a poetry book entitled "A Book of Bynns" which had three poems by Annie Besant.

(vi) Thomas Scott: When Annie Besant was introduced to Thomas Scott in the autumn of 1872 by Charles Voysey, she had reached to a definite point of disbelief in Christianity. Scott had put a very great influence in the free-thought ideology of Annie Besant in the earlier

1. Ibid. p.206.

stages of her doubt in Christian religion.

Scott was a well born, widely travelled and wealthy man, who determined to use his wealth for the propagation of intelligent and sincere religious doubt. He issued, for many years, monthly a series of pamphlets, all heretical, though very varying in their shades of thought. All these pamphlets were well written, cultured and polished in tone. Writing about Thomas Scott, Annie Besant says "At his house met people of the most varied opinions; it was a veritable heretical salon. Colenso of Natal, Edward Matland, E. Vansittart Neale, Charles Bray, Sarah Hennell, and hundreds more, clerics and laymen, scholars and thinkers, all coming to this one house, to which the entree was gained only by love of Truth and desire to spread Freedom among men".¹ Annie Besant wrote, for Thomas Scott, her first free-thought essay only a few months after her meeting him through Voysey.

Annie Besant wrote a series of pamphlets for Scott. These tracts had such titles as "On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth (1873), According to St. John (1873), Natural Religion Versus Revealed Religion (1874), On the Eternal Torture (1874), On Inspiration (1874), On the Atonement (1874), On the Religious Education of Children (1874),

1. Ibid, pp.210-211.

Euthansia (1875), On Prayer (1875), On the Mediation and Salvation of Ecclesiastical Christianity (1875), On the Nature and the Existence of God (1875), The Beauties of the Prayer Book Part I, II & III (1876) and Constructive Rationalism (1876). When Annie Besant had written these pamphlets she called herself a Theist and a Free-thinker.

Annie Besant had formed a very close intimacy with both the Scotts, husband and wife and they also helped Annie Besant at the time of adversity, when Annie Besant was left alone by the legal separation of her husband and the death of her mother. Thomas Scott gave Annie Besant a great help in the form of money, food, comfort and moral support. On the death of Thomas Scott, on the last day of 1878, Annie Besant wrote: "It was Thomas Scott, whose house was open to me when my need was sorest, and he never knew, this generous, noble heart, how sometimes when I went in, weary and overdone, from a long day's study in the British Museum, with scarce food to struggle through the day - he never knew how his genial, 'well, little lady' in welcoming tone, cheered the then utter loneliness of my life. To no living man - save one - do I owe the debt of gratitude that I owe to Thomas Scott".¹

(vii) Charles Bradlaugh: Writing in the memory of Thomas Scott Annie Besant had written "To no living man -

1. Ibid. pp.225-226.

save one" she referred to that 'one', who was Charles Bradlaugh, who had very greatly influenced and impressed Annie Besant's future life and works. It was on August 2, 1874 that Annie Besant entered the Free-thought Hall, saw Charles Bradlaugh and heard for the first time his lecture "on the resemblances between the Krishna and the Christ myths". He invited Annie Besant to talk over the subject of Atheism if she would make an appointment. He also offered Annie Besant a book which he had been using in his lecture.

From that first meeting of 2 August, 1874 dated a friendship which broke till the death of Charles Bradlaugh. Explaining Bradlaugh's influence over her, Annie Besant says: "Let me here place on record, as I have done before, some word of what I owe him for his true friendship; though, indeed how great is my debt to him I can never tell. Some of his wise phrases have ever remained in my memory "you should never say you have an opinion on a subject until you have tried to study the strongest things said against the view to which you are inclined". "You must not think you know a subject until you are acquainted with all that the best minds have said about it". "No steady work can be done in public unless the worker study at home for more than he talks outside". "Be your own harshest judge, listen to your own speech and criticize it;

read, abuse of yourself and see what grains of truth are in it".Through our long comradeship he was my sternest as well as gentlest critic.....He saved me from the superficiality that my "fatal facility" of speech might so easily have induced; and when I began to taste the intoxication of easily won applause, his criticism of weak points, his challenge of weak arguments, his trained judgments, were of priceless service to me, and what of value there is in my work is very largely due to his influence, which at once stimulated and restrained".¹

Charles Bradlaugh was extremely courteous especially to women. He would stand with uplifted hat as he asked a question of a maid-servant or handed a woman into a carriage. This courtesy in him was because he was a widely travelled person and he was absolutely indifferent to all questions of social position: peer or artisan, it was to him exactly the same.

The first conversation between Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh took place in August 1874. Annie Besant had brought along her the manuscript of her book "On the Nature and Existence of God" to serve as the basis of their conversation. Bradlaugh read the manuscript very attentively and told Annie Besant very frankly that there was very little difference in their views. He informed

1. Ibid. pp.234-35.

her, "you have thought yourself into Atheism without knowing it".¹ All that Annie Besant changed in her essay under discussion was her 'vulgar error' to the effect that the atheist says "there is no God". This she corrected to the truer philosophic position that the atheist says he can find no acceptable evidence that there is a God.

At the end of their first discussion Annie Besant invited Charles Bradlaugh to come down to see her at Narwood. Bradlaugh curtly warned her that she would pay heavily for any friendship extended to him because he was very much hated by English society. Later Annie Besant wrote him a letter repeating her invitation and telling him that she had counted the cost, he accepted the invitation and came to see her. This friendship brought problems and troubles to Annie Besant, she writes "but the strength and happiness of it outweighed a thousand times the loss it brought, and never has a shadow of regret touched me that I clasped hands with him in 1874, and won the noblest friend that woman ever had".²

It did not take Bradlaugh long to know the worth of Annie Besant. Only a few days after their first meeting he offered Annie Besant a job on the staff of his paper 'National Reformer' at one guinea a week. In return

1. Ibid. pp.236-37.

2. Ibid. p.274.

she was to write reviews, articles and a regular section, of personal comments which Annie Besant, entitled "Day Break". For this paper Annie Besant adopted her nom de guerre "Ajax". On 30 August, three weeks after her entry into the National Secular Society of Bradlaugh that "Ajax" published her first column.

In the first week "Ajax" generally made remarks on such topics as secular education, cremation, international news and table - tapping. In the ensuing weeks she continued to demonstrate her mastery of the contemporary scene. No province of knowledge was beyond the tip of her pen. She wrote reviews of books ranging from economics and practical politics to Milton. By the end of September "Ajax" was fully launched on her new career as a National Reformer.

In January 1875 after much thought and self-analysis Annie Besant made her mind to give herself wholly to propagandist work as a Free thinker and a social reformist and to use her tongue as well as pen in the struggle. She started helping Bradlaugh in his election campaign, lectured in the Hall of Science, published and jointly sold with Charles Bradlaugh the controversial book on birth control and fought the case in the court. The polemics of the book on birth control deprived legally Annie Besant of the one child of which she had been given the custody.

All the difficulties and troubles of Annie Besant were equally shared by Charles Bradlaugh who remained a guiding force to her activities and thoughts. Bradlaugh was, writes Bernard Shaw "quite simply a hero; a single champion of Anti-Christendom against the seventy-seven champions of Christendom. He was not a leader; he was a wonder whom men followed and obeyed. He was a terrific opponent, making his way by an overwhelming personal force which reduced his most formidable rivals to pigmies".¹ To Annie Besant the influence of Bradlaugh was of greatest help; it was primarily practical. Bradlaugh always set before Annie Besant an example of what patience, strength and certainty may accomplish. Writing in March 1891, in 'The Review of Reviews' after the death of Bradlaugh, about his influence on the others, Annie Besant says "His vivid and intense personality, his imperious will, his imposing physique, acted strongly on every one who came in touch with him; all he touched became either his friends or his foes. None who knew him remained indifferent to him; he aroused bitterer hatreds against himself than did any other man of his time, and he awoke more passionate enthusiasm and devoted love".²

The close relationship and joint participation in free thought and political work had made the intimates of Annie

1. Shaw, Bernard: Mrs. Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism, an article published in the Annie Besant Centenary Book, Page 19.

2. Annie Besant: "Charles Bradlaugh: A Character Sketch" published in 'The Review of Reviews' March 1891, Reprinted in 1941. p. 9.

Besant and Charles Bradlaugh to think ~~some~~ impropriety in the relation between them. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, daughter of Charles Bradlaugh, who should have known if any one did, writes: "They were mutually attracted; and a friendship sprang up between them of so close a nature that had both been free it would undoubtedly have ended in marriage. In their common labours, in the risks and responsibilities jointly undertaken, their friendship grew and strengthened and the insult and calumny heaped upon them only served to cement the bond".¹

Sri Prakasa, son of Dr. Bhagwan Dass who was a colleague of Annie Besant in her theosophical and educational work, a disciple of Annie Besant from his childhood and the former governor of Bombay and Madras comments "Personally I think Mrs. Besant was the one person who was capable of the deepest affections without any thought of sex; and she was a woman of such remarkable courage that when she was working with colleagues she did not care what the world thought of her personal attachment to those colleagues and her absolute abandon to the cause for which they were working together".²

(viii) George Bernard Shaw: Annie Besant met Bernard Shaw in 1885, who was according to her "one of the

1. Bonner, Hypatia Bradlaugh: "Charles Bradlaugh", Volume II, pp. 12-13.

2. Prakasa, Sri: "Annie Besant: As Woman and as Leader", p. 37.

most provoking of men; a man with a perfect genius for 'aggravating' the enthusiastically earnest, and with a passion for representing himself a scoundrel".¹ Those, days Shaw described himself jestingly 'a loafer', the word Annie Besant detested. She liked Shaw because he was a very poor writer with certain definite set principles with him; preferring starving his body than to starving his conscience. Shaw worked hard day and night for the good of the people and Annie Besant also liked to join the Fabian Society so as to work for the cause of Socialism.

By 21 January 1885, Annie Besant had made up her mind to join the Fabian Society, though the world did not know her intentions. Shaw had gone to the Dialectical Society to deliver an address advocating socialism, and had found the members upset by the appearance of Annie Besant who had long ceased to attend meetings and who was still considered the most redoubtful champion of the free-thought movement. Shaw writes "I was warned on all hands that she had come down to destroy me, and that from the moment she rose to speak my cause was lost. I resigned myself to my fate, and placed my case as best I could. When the discussion began everyone waited for Mrs. Besant to lead the opposition. She did not rise; and at last the

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", p.402.

opposition was undertaken by another member. When he had finished, Mrs. Besant, to the amazement of the meeting, got up and utterly demolished him. There was nothing left for me to do but gasp and triumph under her shield. At the end she asked me to nominate her for election to the Fabian Society".¹ This was the first time that Shaw had actually made the acquaintance of Annie Besant.

In selecting the Fabian Society for her passage through Socialism Annie Besant had made a sane choice because her association of Shaw and other Fabians had made her to understand some important social problems and also helped her to write pamphlets and deliver her successful lectures on the different facets of Socialism.

It was inherent in Annie Besant's nature that she would remain attached to any Society upto that time only when she would find some strenuous work for her in its establishment, and when that society would have been fully organized Annie Besant found a distaste to remain in it by joining a new Society or faith "preaching the new faith, before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken".² When Annie Besant had joined the Fabian Society she had tried hard to become, writes Shaw, "a sort of expeditionary force, always to

1. Shaw, George Bernard: "Annie Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism", an article published in 'The Annie Besant Centenary Book', p.23.

2. Ibid. p.17.

the front when there was trouble and danger carrying away audience for us when the dissensions in the movement brought our policy into conflict with that of the other societies, founding branches for us throughout the country, dashing into the great strikes and free-speech agitations of that time (the eighteen-eighties) forming on her own initiative such ad hoc organizations as were necessary to make them effective, and generally leaving the routine to us and taking the fighting on herself. Her powers of continuous work were prodigious.....An attempt to keep pace with her on the part of a mere man generally wrecked the man: those who were unselfish enough to hold out to the end usually collapsed and added the burden of nursing them to her already super human labours".¹

When the Fabian Society was firmly established Annie Besant's interest in the Society died and her restless character began to pant for finding a new outlet, she swept ahead with her accustomed suddenness and impetuosity and joined a new faith known as Theosophy.

Writing about Annie Besant's march from Socialism towards Theosophy, Shaw writes: "One day I was speaking to Mr. H.W. Massingham, then editor of the 'Star', at the office of that paper in Stonecutter Street. I glanced at

1. Ibid. pp.21-22.

the proofs which were lying scattered about the table. One of them was headed "why I became a Theosophist"? I immediately looked down to the foot of the slip for the signature, and saw that it was Annie Besant. Staggered by this unprepared blow, which meant to me the loss of a powerful colleague and of a friendship which had become part of my daily life, I rushed round to her office in Fleet Street and..... I played all the tricks by which I could usually puzzle her, or move her to a wounded indignation.....But this time I met my match. She listened to me with complete kindness and genuine amusement.....she had after many explorations found her path and come to see the universe and herself in their real perspective".¹

(ix) William T. Stead: Annie Besant met Stead², the editor of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' and 'Review of Reviews', during the mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square on account of the worst economic depression in Britain in the middle eighties. The situation in the country had become tense, the labour conditions were very deplorable and unemployment stared grimly from every side. Mills and factories were shutting up. The jobless slouched listlessly through the streets, thronged to mass meetings in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square to hear hot speeches by the revolutionaries.

1. Ibid. pp.23-24.

2. Stead, W.T.: was best known as the editor of the Pall Mall Gazette published in the afternoons in London. The paper, which had had John Morley for editor, under Stead as editor was widely read in all parts of Britain,(contd..).

From the beginning of 1886 these meetings began to multiply in number and attendance. All through 1886 and 1887 the grievances of the people accumulated against the government, which proved unable to do anything to ameliorate the conditions of the people. When the agitators took over, the police made arrests but the demonstrations increased day by day resulting in more of arrests.

At that critical time Annie Besant in co-operation with her new friend Stead formed a new organization "Law and Liberty League" on 18 November 1886 with the Liberal M.P., Jacob Bright as its Chairman and Annie Besant, John William, William Morris, William T. Stead, Rev. Steward D. Headlam, John Burns, Henry M. Hyndman, G.W. Foote and Dr. Richard Pankhurst as members. Though all the members of the 'Law and Liberty League' were of diverse interests but the league was organized without any trouble and it quickly started operations. Bradlaugh, Aveling and Shaw wrote in praise of Annie Besant in the papers for her remarkable work in the new league.

For a long time, as a result of Annie Besant's turbulent experiences in social reform, and the general unrest of the time she had been wondering whether a new

(Continued from page 147).

2. because it stood not merely for Liberalism in politics, but was also the champion of all schemes for the liberalisation of the thoughts and minds of the British people. Stead introduced for the first time the interview in the history of journalism.

humanistic religion based on a "common ground of faith in and love for man",¹ would not be possible. In the "Our corner" for February 1888 Annie Besant wrote "I found that my friend Mr. W.T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, had long been brooding over a similar thought and wondering whether man 'might not be persuaded to be as earnest about making this world happy as they are over saving their souls'. The teaching of social duty, the upholding of social righteousness, the building up of a true commonwealth - such would be among the aims of the church of the future.....If there be a faith that can remove the mountains of ignorance and evil, it is surely that faith in the ultimate triumph of Right, in the final enthronement of Justice, which alone makes life worth the living, and which gems the blackest cloud of depression with the rainbow - coloured arch of an immortal hope."²

The above quotation from Annie Besant's Autobiography clearly reveals how she was unconsciously marching towards the Theosophy as she wanted to seek that path which may lead her to the service of man. As a step towards bringing about a union of those ready to work for 'Man' Annie Besant and Stead resolved to start a new magazine, the 'Link' a half penny weekly, the spirit of which was described in its motto,

1. Annie Besant: 'An Autobiography', p.429.

2. Ibid, pp.429-31.

taken from Victor Hugo: "The People are silence. I will be the advocate of the silence. I will speak for the dumb. I will speak of the small to the great and of the feeble to the strong.....I will speak for all the despairing silent ones. I will interpret this stammering; I will interpret the grumblings, the murmurs, the tumults of crowds, the complaints ill-pronounced, and all these cries of beasts that, through ignorance and through suffering, man is forced to utter.....I will be the World of the People. I will be the bleeding mouth whence the gag is snatched out. I will say everything".¹ The main object of the magazine the 'Link' was to be the building up of a 'New Church' dedicated to the service of man.

In 1889 William T. Stead gave to Annie Besant the book "The Secret Doctrine" in two fat volumes written by H.P. Blavatsky, saying "Can you review these? My young men all fight shy of them, but you are quite made enough on these subjects to make something of them".² Annie Besant carried the books home, read them with rapt attention and keen interest. During the course of her fiercely determined study of the book, Annie Besant wrote one of her 'Annie', notes to Stead: "I am immersed in Madame Blavatsky. If I perish in the attempt to review her,

1. Ibid. p.432.

2. Ibid. p.440.

you must write on my tomb, 'she has gone to investigate the Secret Doctrine at first hand'".¹ Annie Besant sent the review to Stead.

Stead was already introduced to H.P. Blavatsky through Mme Olga Novikoff, a Russian lady at whose salon Stead had found the noted dignitaries of England such as Gladstone, Froude, Mathew Arnold, Carlyle and other notable. Stead first met Mme Novikoff in 1887 and next year she had written him asking whether he would like to meet Mme Blavatsky. Stead was interested in the Occult science of Blavatsky so he went and was delighted with and at the same time somewhat repelled by this strange, unconventional, masculine woman who gave him her photograph and told him that he was a good Theosophist.

When Annie Besant asked Stead for an introduction to the writer of the 'Secret Doctrine', which he very gladly gave. Annie Besant sent a note to Mme Blavatsky asking to be allowed to call. Thus through Mme Novikoff, Annie Besant was able to meet Mme Blavatsky.

(x) Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: It was H.P. Blavatsky, commonly known as 'H.P.B.', a Russian noble-woman of extraordinary endowments, who, on receipt of a cordial and flattering letter, invited Annie Besant to meet her. On a

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: "First Five Lives of Annie Besant". P.297. Mr. Nethercot records this reference from the paper 'Star' of 10 January 1889.

soft spring evening in 1889 Annie Besant walked from Notting Hill Station to the door of 17 Lansdowne Road, the residence of H.P.B., wondering what she would see behind the door.

In her own words Annie Besant narrates the story of her first meeting with H.P.B.: "Through folding doors thrown back, a figure in a large chair before a table, a voice vibrant, compelling, "My dear Mrs. Besant, I have so long wished to see you", and I was standing with my hand in her firm grip, and looking for the first time in this life straight into the eyes of 'H.P.B.' I was conscious of a sudden leaping forth of my heart - was it recognition? - and then, I am ashamed to say, a fierce rebellion, a fierce withdrawal, as of some wild animal when it feels a mastering hand".¹ Annie Besant expressed her desire to H.P.B. to know from her a little more of her sources of her knowledge but H.P.B. made only an informal chatting, talking nothing about her mysteries or occultism, merely just as a woman talks to her evening visitors. The meeting was utter disappointment to Annie Besant but as she rose to go, she writes "for a moment the veil lifted, and two brilliant eyes met mine, and with a yearning throb in the voice: Oh, my dear Mrs. Besant, if you would only come among us."²

1. Ibid. p.441.

2. Ibid. p.442.

But Annie Besant though feeling "a well-nigh uncontrollable desire to bend down and kiss her, under the compulsion of that yearning, voice, those compelling eyes",¹ hardened her heart to the hypnotic powers of H.P.B., said a common place polite good-bye and turned away.

Since 1886 there had been slowly growing up a conviction in Annie Besant that her philosophy of life was not sufficient to answer her own riddles: that life and mind were different than what she thought about them and to understand them fully was beyond her mental compass. At that time, just after the middle half of the nineteenth century many new sciences were making speedy progresses with the result that new vistas of knowledge were taking definite shape; Psychology, Hypnotism, spiritualism, clairvoyance, clairaudience and thought reading were revealing unlooked for complex thought. Annie Besant studied the obscure sides of consciousness, dreams, dreams illusions, insanity, supernaturalism, spiritualism and experimented privately to find the truth. She read a variety of books but could find little in them that satisfied her.

At last Annie Besant convinced herself that there was some hidden power and she resolved to seek until she found, she writes, "By the early spring of 1889 I had

1. Ibid. p.
1. Loc. cit.

grown desperately determined to find at all hazards what I sought. At last, sitting alone in deep thoughts..... I heard a Voice that was later to become to me the holiest sound on earth, bidding me take courage for the light was near".¹

That desired light was shed upon Annie Besant when she got the book 'The Secret Doctrine' in two volumes written by H.P.B., from Stead for review. Annie Besant writes, "As I turned over page after page the interest became absorbing; but how familiar it seemed; how my mind leaped forward to presage the conclusion, how natural it was, how coherent, how subtle, and yet how intelligible. I was dazzled, blinded by the light in which disjoined facts were seen as parts of a mighty whole, and all my puzzles, middles, problems seemed to disappear.....the light had been seen, and in that flash of illumination I knew that the weary search was over and the very Truth was found".² To understand fully that found Truth Annie Besant went again to meet H.P.B. to permit her to join Theosophy.

Annie Besant signed an application to be admitted as fellow (as the members of the Theosophical Society call themselves) of the Theosophical Society. After

1. Ibid. p.440.

2. Ibid. p.441.

signing her application and receiving her diploma Annie Besant hastened to 17 Lansdowne Road to report H.P.B. what she has done. There with tears in the eyes of both, pupil and the teacher, Annie Besant bent down herself before H.P.B. and received her blessings. From that day, '10th of May, 1889¹ Annie Besant never wavered her trust in H.P.B. and in Theosophy, and remained staunch Theosophist upto her last breath of life.

(xi) Bp. Charles Webster Leadbeater: Annie Besant met C.W. Leadbeater for the first time in the year 1890 - neither of them could remember the day or the month - in A.P. Sinnett's drawing room in Ladbroke Grove, London. Annie Besant wanted to form new ties with some new intimates because after her conversion to Theosophy she had broken, either wholly or partially, most of her ties with the associates of her past life.

Annie Besant had been hearing about Leadbeater for some time in 1889 but had not yet met him. She had read in the papers some innuendoes about the record of the past lives of Leadbeater who was then an Anglican Curate in Hampshire and later received an enthusiastic Hampshire and later received an enthusiastic reception in Ceylone as a Buddhist and a Theosophist.

1. Annie Besant was formally admitted to the Theosophical Society on 21 May, 1889 (see the Golden Book of the Theosophical Society Adyar, Madras, 1925 p.102.

The first meeting of 1890 brought Annie Besant and Leadbeater close to each other and within four or five years her friendship with Leadbeater began to ripen into the most far-reaching influence in her whole life.

During the middle nineties Annie Besant's principal interest in England was "Occultism". She was deeply immersed in developing her occult propensities. Those days Leadbeater was coming into popularity due to his lectures and articles on occult and psychic psychology. He wrote a ninety-page booklet on 'The Astral Plan' and gained reputation. Annie Besant also published her 1894 Adyar Lectures, entitled 'The Self and Its Sheaths' for which the Founder-President of the Theosophical Society awarded her the highly prized Subha Rao Medal.

The similarity in their interests in Occultism, Hypnotism, Psychology and Psychic powers drew Annie Besant more near to Leadbeater. She offered him the post of Assistant Secretary to the European Section of the Theosophical Society. At this time Leadbeater had contributed his articles on subjects like "Dreams" and "The Aura" to the journals of the Theosophical Society. Leadbeater dealt the subject of dreams very scientifically discussing in detail such matters as physical, etheric and astral mechanism, the ego, the conditions of sleep on brain and different kinds of dreams with experiments on the dream-state.

When Leadbeater had written his book on dream, four years before Sigmund Freud's book "The Interpretation of Dreams" had already been published in 1900, where the subject of dreams was interpreted in the light of his theory of sex, a large number of other psychologists were also working on similar issues. But Leadbeater's article on 'dream: what they are and how they are caused' was based purely on the investigations along Theosophical lines".¹ At the same time Annie Besant had published her Queen's Hall Lectures under the title "Man and his Bodies".

In May 1894 Leadbeater was prompted by Annie Besant to make a specific investigation into the individual past of the man. By a process of spiritual concentration and psychic reconstruction Leadbeater discovered that while every body was there, he was able to look up to sixteen of the past reincarnations. Annie Besant became a collaborator of Leadbeater, though Leadbeater himself remained the key figure and did almost all the writing. In August 1895 Annie Besant accompanied Leadbeater, to an isolated country place known as "The Cottage" in Box Hall, Surrey, to concentrate and conduct a variety of Occult experiments. It was here that Annie Besant first learned to use her astral vision and to help Leadbeater with his investigations especially of 'devachan'.

1. Leadbeater, C.W: Dreams: "What they are and how they are caused", Chapter I, Introductory, p.6.

In this fashion Annie Besant and Leadbeater made their investigations jointly for many years, which were jointly published in the form of books bearing the names of both of them on the title pages.

For writing their books "Man: Whence, How and Whither: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigations", both Annie Besant and Leadbeater had gone to Taormina in Italy. Working on the book Leadbeater in an inspired mood gazed into the akashic records and dictated his new observations of the past lives of the dedicated Theosophists. The wonderful book grew and grew. Annie Besant's role was only contributory, she always saw what Leadbeater saw and stimulated him with added details.

The mighty problem faced by the investigators had been pronounced at the opening of the Chapter I written by Annie Besant: "Whence comes man and whither goes he? In the fullest answer we can only say: Man as a spiritual Being, comes forth from God; but the whence and Whither with which we deal here denote a far more modest sweep. It is but a single page of his life-story that is copied out herein, telling of the birth into dense matter of some of the Children of Man - what lies beyond that birth-ing, O still unpenetrated Night? - and following on their growth from world to world to a point in the near future but some few centuries hence - what lies beyond that

cloud-flush in the dawning, O still unrisen Day?"¹ Here a struggle had been explained which was dualistic in nature, between spirit and Matter for the Mastery, when spirit finally becomes master, Man is no longer Man but Superman. Here Annie Besant deals with Man only as a Man, in his embryonic stage, in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. Man, in Annie Besant's thesis, starts his development from the human kingdom and ends with "Man and his worlds, the Thinker and his field of evolution".²

The theosophic view of evolution, which Annie Besant recommended was opposed to the creative evolution of Bergson and it was purely influenced by Leadbeater and H.P.B.

Annie Besant wrote many books jointly with Leadbeater. Thought-Forms (1905), Occult Chemistry: A series of Clairvoyant observations on the chemical elements (1909), Lettere Dello Spazio (1910) and Man: Whence, How and Whither: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigations (1913).

Paying a tribute to Leadbeater on his 77th birthday Annie Besant said: "I, his nearest colleague, united to him by ties unbreakable, knowing him as none other living in the outer world knows him.....We strive together to serve our Elder Brethren, careful only to make ourselves

1. Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater: "Man: Whence, How and Whither", p.1.

2. Ibid. p.2.

the channels of the One Will in the Service of which is perfect Freedom".¹

Other Persons: The story of the influences of some persons over Annie Besant's life and work does not finish here by mentioning only the association and close attachment of eleven persons to her, who influenced the course of her perennial philosophy and life, by one way or the other. There was also a band of other intellectual wayfarers who put their colourful impact on her at a certain stage of her life, that may not have proved of a very great significance to Annie Besant, but which did help in moulding her life and shaping her philosophy.

Names of some of the persons, who were associates of Annie Besant, are recorded as follows:-

A.P. Sinnett, Arthur Digby (Annie Besant's son),
Bhagwan Dass, B.P. Wadia, B. Shiva Rao, Col. Olcott,
Countess Constance Wachtmeister, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar,
Edward Aveling, Esther Bright, F. Gordon Pearce,
George Lansbury, George Arundale, G.V. Shubha Rao,
G.W. Foote, Henry M. Hyndman, Herbert Burrows,
Iqbal Narain Gurtu, Jedu Krishnamurti, John Burns,
Jamanadas Dwarkadas, Kanji Dwarkadas, Mabel Besant
(daughter of Annie Besant), Madan Mohan Malaviya,
M.K. Gandhi, Nand Kumar, N. Sri Ram, N. Yagneshwara
Sastri, Rev. C.W. Leadbeater, Rev. Frank Besant (husband

of Annie Besant), Rev. Mocure Conway, Rev. Steward D. Headlam, Rukmini Devi Arundale, S.V. Subramanyam Aiyar, Sidney Webb, William Morris and many others.

(3) The Influence of Books and Authors: Had William Burton Persee Wood, the father of Annie Besant, loved longer the story of Annie Besant's life might have been totally different, but as things were, it was inevitable to avoid the actual course of events in her life. Annie Besant was hardly of five that her father died and she became a lovely girl in a family of three members - brother at school and mother working hard to earn for the destitute family - being left alone Annie Besant had to solace herself with weaving fairy tales around her or reading books at a very young age of five years. She writes "How or when I learned to read, I do not know, for I cannot remember the time when a book was not a delight. At five years of age I must have read easily, for I remember being often unswatched from a delightful curtain, in which I used to roll myself with a book".¹

Annie Besant had the habit of losing herself so completely in her books that she writes "my name might be called in the room where I was, and I never hear it, so that I used to be blamed for wilfully hiding myself, when

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.139.

I had simply been away in fairyland, or lying trembling beneath some friendly cabbage-leaf as a giant went by".¹

Annie Besant boldly criticises the materialistic tendency of her elders who did not allow her to develop her imagination, based on her study of the fairy tales, she writes "The dreamy tendency in the child, that on its worldly side is fancy, imagination, on its religious side is the germ of mysticism, and I believe it to be far more common than many people think. But the remorseless materialism of the day - not the philosophic materialism of the few, but the religious materialism of the many - crushes out all the delicate buddings forth of the childish thought, and bandages the eyes that might otherwise see.....clumsy grown-ups come along and tramp right through the dream-garden, and crush the dream-flowers, and push the dream-children aside..... But this tendency in me was too strong to be stifled, and it found its food in the fairy tales I loved".²

Young Annie was so much fascinated by the reading of books that while describing her love for books, when she was hardly of seven years, she says, "In the study I would sit for hours with some favourite book - Milton's 'Paradise Lost' the chief favourite of all. The birds

1. Ibid. pp.139-140.

2. Ibid. pp.138-139.

must have felt startled, when from the small swinging form perching on a branch, came out in childish tones the "Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers", of Milton's stately and sonorous verse. I liked to personify Satan, and to declaim the grand speeches of the hero rebel, and many a happy hour did I pass in Milton's heaven and hell, with for companions Satan and "the Son", Gabriel and Abdiel".¹

When Annie Besant was between seven and eight years of age, she came across some children's allegories of a religious kind and a very little later she read "Pilgrim's Progress". In Miss Marryat's academy, when Annie Besant was hardly nine years old that she read some tales by Sir Walter Scott. She made a mention of a tale, in her 'Autobiography', of a horrid old woman "who glided up to the foot of your bed and sprang on it in some eerie fashion and glared at you".² This story made for Annie Besant, going to bed a terror for many weeks.

Annie Besant's novel reading was extremely limited. Her mother regarded novels as ordinary love stories for unhealthy reading which caused pre-mature love dreams and unripe sentimentality in girls. She gave Annie Besant only the novels of Scott and Kingsley and not of Mrs. Braddon

1. Ibid. pp.130-131.

2. Ibid. p.143.

or Mrs. Henry Wood.

Not later than ten year's age Annie Besant got a great liking for literature. At that time she used to keep a list of books that she read so that she might not neglect her other work. She studied also some stray scientific works, but the number of such works was very limited. The atmosphere around her was literary rather than scientific. She read a translation of Plato with delight but unsatiable questionings of Socrates annoyed her. Lord Derby's translation of Iliad charmed her with its stateliness and melody. Dante was another favourite study of her. Among poets Annie Besant read Wordsworth, Cowper, Milton, Dante, Spencer and Southey. Writing about her study of these poets Annie Besant says "Wordsworth and Cowper I much disliked and into the same category went all the 17th and 18th century 'poets', though I read them conscientiously through. Southey fascinated me with his wealth of Oriental fancies, while Spencer was a favourite book, put beside Milton and Dante".¹

Soon some strange mystic and religious writers won over Annie Besant a great fascination. She set a 'Library of the Fathers' on her book shelves, selected that one for piece de resistance. With her deep study of mysticism

1. Annie Besant: 'Autobiographical Sketches' p.27.

and religion Annie Besant threw herself "ardently into a study of the question: 'Where is now the Catholic Church?'"¹ She read Pusey, Liddon and Keble, with many others of that school and many of the 17th century English divines.

At the age of fourteen or fifteen years Annie Besant became satisfied when she found that the practices and doctrines of the Anglican Church could not be knitted on to those of the martyrs and confessors of the early church, for it had not yet struck Annie Besant that the early church might itself be challenged. Annie Besant writes, "To me, at that time, the authority of the Jesus was supreme and unassailable; his apostles were his infallible messengers; Clement of Rome, Polycarp, the Barnabas, these were the very pupils of the apostles themselves. I never dreamed of forgeries, of pious frauds, of writing falsely ascribed to venerated names. Nor do I now regret that so it was; for without belief, the study of the Early Fathers would be an intolerable weariness; and that old reading of mine has served me well in many of my later controversies with Christians, who knew the literature of their Church less well than I".²

Annie's mother was very much interested in Annie's reading of books, she wished young Annie to spend her most

1. Ibid. p.26.

2. Ibid. p.26.

of the time in studies. Annie utilized her mornings and much of the afternoon in eager earnest study. Though her mother was under a constant pressure of the heavy burden of Annie's brother's school and college expenses and the domestic problems yet she always tried to send Annie with affectionate love to study books. Annie Besant writes "If I sometimes would coaxingly ask if I might not help by sewing in laces, or by doing some trifle in aid, she would kiss me and bid me run to my books".¹

It were the two masters of the Harrow school, residing in the boarding house set up by Annie's mother in her house, who gave such books to Annie which made her to doubt in the Bible. These masters were the friends of Colenso, the heretic Bishop of Natal who did doubt the historical accuracy of the Bible. By reading the books, lent by the Harrow masters, written by Colenso, Stanley and Pusey, especially his "Daniel the Prophet" a doubt about the historical accuracy of the Bible was caused in her. Her mother did not like her reading such books. Annie Besant writes "My mother objected to my reading controversial books which dealt with the points at issue between Christianity and Free thought".²

But the doubt was actually caused when in the Easter

1. Ibid. p.25.

2. Ibid. p.31.

of 1866 Annie Besant resolved to write a brief history of the Easter week, in order to facilitate the realization of those last sacred days of God incarnate on earth, working out man's salvation but she found some apparent contradictions in the Bible. This caused the first doubt in her when she was of eighteen years, and went with her upto 1889 when she was of forty two years. In this span of, somewhat more than, two decades Annie Besant remained a Free-thinker theist, athiest, secularist and socialist she read books written by Mc Leon Campbell, Roberston, Brighton, Nansel's lectures, Maurice's Gospel of the Kingdom of Heven' (a commentry on S. Luke) and many others which have no mention in her autobiography or biographical sketches. Annie Besant writes "Despite reading the argument, my scepticism grew only deeper and deeper. The study of W.R. Greg's "creed of Christendom" of Mathew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma", helped to widen the mental horizon, while making a return to the old faith more and more impossible.I was only a doubter, I spoke to none of my doubts. It was possible I felt that all my difficulties might be cleared up, and I had no right to shake the faith of others while in uncertainty myself. Others had doubted AND HAD afterwards believed; for the doubter silence was a duty; the blinded had better keep their misery to themselves".¹

1. Ibid. p.60.

But it was H.P. Blavatsky's "The Secret Doctrine" that had ~~so~~ definitely precluded doubts of all manner from the life of Annie Besant. In a reply to the letter of W.T. Stead, editor of "The Review of Reviews", asking her to give him briefly the genesis of her Theosophical development, Annie Besant wrote that she "could find no answer to problems of life and mind in Materialism, especially as touching -

1. Hypnotic and mesmeric experiments, clairvoyance, etc.
2. Double consciousness, dreams.
3. Effect on the body of mental conceptions.
4. Line between object and subject worlds.
5. Memory, especially as studied in disease.
6. Diseased keenness of sense-perception.
7. Thought transference.
8. Genius, different types of character in family, etc.

"These were some of the puzzles. Then Sinnett's books gave me the idea that there might be a different line of investigation possible. I had gone into spiritualism, I went into it again, and got some queer results. But I got no real satisfaction until I got the 'Secret Doctrine' from you to review. I ought to add that I had long been deeply troubled as to the "beyond" of all my efforts at social and political reform.....Here Theosophy, with its proof of the higher nature in man, came as a ray of light,

and its teaching of the training of that nature gave solid ground for hope. May I add that its call to limitless self-sacrifice for human good - a call addressed to all who can answer it - came to me as offering satisfaction to what has always been the deepest craving of my nature - the longing to serve as ransom for the race. At once I recognized that here was the path to that which I had been seeking all my life".¹

The other important books besides "The Secret Doctrine", which played a great role in moulding Annie Besant were the various Scriptures. The teachings as are found in Quran: "The God belongeth the East and the West; therefore wherever thou turnest thyself to pray, there is the face of God, for God is omnipresent and Omniscient" (Al Quran, 11,115), "All is from God" (Ibid,iv,77), "God seeth that which you do" (Ibid,Ivii, 4)² and "No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself" (The saying of Muhammad, 3)³ were absorbed by Annie Besant writing about the greatness of the teaching of Quran Annie Besant writes "No other facts are declared to be true on so weighty and united an authority as these, an authority stretching back beyond the

1. Letter of Annie Besant recorded by W.T.Stead in his book "Annie Besant: A Character Sketch (1891) pp.90-91.

2. Annie Besant: "The Universal book of Religion & Morals" (Part I: Religion), pp.23-25.

3. Annie Besant:"The Universal Book of Religion & Morals", (Part II: Ethics), p.25.

dawn of history.....and constantly reinforced by new witnesses at the dawn of each successive civilisation, from Oannes to Muhammad".¹

The Bible had put a very deep impression on Annie Besant, in her early life. She fasted according to the ordinance of the Church and Christ was the figure round which clustered all her hopes and longings, till she often felt that the very passion of her devotion would draw him down from his throne in heaven. Annie Besant used to make prayers in which she found immense delight. Some of her prayers were as follows:-

"O most sweet Jesu Christ, I unworthy sinner, yet redeemed by thy precious blood.....Thine I am and will be, in life and in death.

"O Jesu, beloved, fairer than the sons of men, draw me after Thee with the cords of Thy love".²

After her adhesion to Theosophy in 1889 Annie Besant was attracted towards the various Hindu religious scriptures, which played a great role in moulding her thought. "Bhagavad Gita", "Ramayana", "Mahabharata" and "Upanishadas" influenced Annie Besant greatly. She translated "The Bhagavad Gita or the Lord's song" into English with

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", p.154.

2. Ibid. p.162.

the help of a great Indian philosopher and her Theosophical colleague, Dr. Bhagwan Dass. In its preface she writes in its preface "since it fell from the divine lips of Shri Krishna, on the field of battle and stilled the surging emotions of His disciples and friends, how many troubled hearts has it quieted and strengthened, how many weary souls has it led to him. It is meant to lift the aspirant from the lower levels of renunciation, where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights where desires are dead and where the Yogi dwells in calm and careless contemplation, while the body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall on his lot in life. That the spiritual man need not be a recluse, that union with the divine life may be achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs, that the obstacles to the union lie not outside us but within us.....such is the central lesson of Bhagvat Gita".¹

The influence of Gita over Annie Besant was very great in 1905, when on the 30th Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, she delivered four lectures on the subject "Hints on the study of the Bhagavad Gita". Annie Besant divided her subject into four topics and explained Gita as (i) The great unveiling, (ii) As Yoga

1. Annie Besant: "The Bhagavad Gita", pp. 11-12.

Shastra, (iii) Methods of Yoga and Bhakti, and (iv) Discrimination and sacrifice. Explaining the subject, Annie Besant says, "To understand the Gita, you must live it, and as you learn to live it, slowly the great meaning will dawn upon your intelligence; only as, step by step, the living is accomplished in the profound unveiling of the mysteries possible for the individual heart".¹ In short Annie Besant declared that "He who can understand the complexity of the Gita can understand likewise the complexity of the world in which"² he lives.

"Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" had inspired Annie Besant to a very great extent. She delivered her lectures at the Central Hindu College Benaras, which were printed in two books: "The Story of the Great War" and "Shri Ram Chandra - the ideal King". Though both of these books are in very simple english and style, but her love and devotion for the Mahabharata and Ramayana is very clearly discernible in them. In her book "The Wisdom of the Upanishads" which is a collection of her four convention lectures delivered at the 31st Anniversary of the Theosophical Society in 1906, shows her attempt, in her own words, "to draw a few drops from the ancient wells

1. Annie Besant: Hints on the study of the Bhagavad Gita, pp. 4-5.

2. Ibid. p.2.

of Aryan Wisdom, and to offer them to quench the thirst of weary souls, travelling through the desert, seeking for truth. The Upanishads.....stand alone as beacon lights on a mountain peak, showing how high man may climb, how much of the light of the self may shine out through the vessel of clay, how truly God may speak through man".¹

Annie Besant had a clear understanding and reverence for scriptures and she wanted that all people of the world may have a deep knowledge of their respective scriptures and religions. So she delivered most of her lectures on the different religions of the world, where she freely quoted the scriptural reference in preaching "a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity". Her convention lectures of the Theosophical Society for 1896 entitled "Four Great Religions", and for 1901 "The Religious Problems in India" cover the subjects of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and Theosophy. These lectures clearly exhibit the influences of the scriptural heritage of the world on her and show how she was able to construct her theosophy on the basis of different scriptures.

(4) The Personal Sufferings: Annie Besant's personal sufferings were the birth-pangs where in a

1. Annie Besant: "The wisdom of the Upanishads" (from the foreward of the book) page iii.

realistic attitude about life was shaped which had contributed to the development of her various philosophical outlooks.

Annie was hardly of five years when she tasted her first suffering, when her loving and affectionate father suddenly died of consumption, whose death brought poverty to the family. Writing about the after-effects caused by the death, Annie Besant says, "Now began my mother's time of struggle and of anxiety. Hitherto since her marriage, she had known no money troubles, for her husband was earning a good income; he was apparently vigorous and well; no thought of anxiety clouded their future. When he died, he believed that he left his wife and children safe, at least, from pecuniary distress.....but nothing was left for the widow and children, save a trifle of ready money".¹ Afterwards the whole family began to live poorly. But Annie's mother was much too strong a nature to remain prostrate even under such a blow. Left all alone, with a young family and next to no means, she never flinched, but worked hard to keep herself and also to find means for the education of her son.

At the age of nineteen Annie met a young curate, Frank Besant, who had a chance to stay with her for a

1. Annie Besant: "Autobiographical Sketches", p.11.

week and before he left, he proposed to Annie. Young religious Annie, while she was still awakening into womanhood, with emotions and passions dawning and not understanding the causes of the biological change in her, took Frank Besant by virtue of his office, a half angelic creature and an "Ideal Man". She writes "one very practical and mischievous result of this religious feeling is the idealisation of all clergymen, as being the special messengers of, and the special means of communication with, the "Most High".¹ Swayed by these feelings, Annie Besant considered the position of a clergyman's wife second only to that of the nun and she willingly got herself engaged to the clergyman.

At the age of twenty the marriage took place and started the most difficult period of her life. Annie's mother had kept young Annie totally ignorant of all her married life's duties and burdens. William T. Stead writes "she had kept her daughter ignorantly innocent of the nature of men and women, through the customary conventional delusion that ignorance is the same as innocence. It was then, as always, a blunder, and in her case a fatal blunder".²

The unhappy married life dated from its very beginning, from the terrible shock to her "sensitive

1. Ibid. p.36.

2. Stead, William T: Annie Besant: A Character Sketch(1891) p.25.

modesty and pride, her helpless bewilderment and fear".¹ Her sufferings began at the outset of her marriage, Annie Besant writes "we were an ill-matched pair, my husband and I, from the very outset; he, with very high ideas of a husband's authority and a wife's submission, holding strongly to the "master-in-my-house-theory" thinking much of the details of home arrangements, precise, methodical, easily angered and with difficulty pleased. I, accustomed to freedom, indifferent to home details, impulsive, very hot-tempered and proud as Lucifer. I had never had a harsh word spoken to me, never been ordered to do anything, had had my way smoothed for my feet and never a worry touched me. Harshness roused first incredulous wonder, then a storm of indignant tears, and after a time a proud, defiant resistance, cold and hard as iron. The easy-going, sunshiny, enthusiastic girl changed - and changed pretty rapidly - into a grave, proud, reticent woman, burying deep in her own heart all her hopes, her fears, and disillusion".²

Annie Besant had been a very unsatisfactory wife from the beginning of her married life and she thought that she might gradually have turned into a fair imitation of the proper conventional type. Annie Besant did

1. Stead, William T: Annie Besant: A Character Sketch(

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", pp.177-178.

not know anything of household management or economical use of money because in the years before her marriage she never had an allowance or even bought herself a house-hold article except books. This type of life of Annie Besant was inexpressible tiring to the Rev-Frank Besant, whose quarreling insults and alleged violence put her into an almost hysterical conditions. It was during July or August 1871 that her quarrels with her husband had increased in violence, and his retaliation had several times taken physical form. One summer night after one of these quarrels when Frank Besant was away Annie Besant in despair considered committing suicide when she heard a voice speaking clearly and softly: "O coward, coward, who used to dream of martyrdom, and cannot bear a few short years of pain". This brought out the warrior spirit in her and she threw the bottle of chloroform out of the window".¹

The companionship between Annie and Frank was not to last long. The unhappy life roused by harshness and injustice, stiffened and hardened, and lived with a wall of ice round her within which she waged mental conflicts that nearly killed her and thus she "learned at last how to live and work in armour that turned the edge of weapon

1. Jinarajadasa, C: 'The Diamond Soul of Annie Besant' article printed in the Annie Besant Centenary Book, p. 11,

that struck it, and left the flesh beneath unwounded".¹ Annie Besant began to make serious efforts at writing 'short stories of a very filmy character' in the Magazine 'the Family Herald' and earn some money to meet her some urgent needs. When her first story called "Sunshine and Shade". A tale founded on fact" was published on 2 May 1868, five months after her marriage, Annie signed it "A.W." (Annie Wood) rather than "A.B." (Annie Besant), this clearly shows that she still wanted to think of herself as "Annie Wood".

Annie Besant was married in December 1867. She gave birth to a male child on 16 January 1869, a little over a year after her marriage, and to a female child on 28th August 1870, with the result that Annie Besant had very bad health due to premature birth of the girl in consequence of a shock, which "was presumably from a blow which her husband, who had refused to listen to her pleas on the necessity of limiting their family, had struck her on the shoulder, while simultaneously suggesting that she leave him and go back home".²

In the spring of 1871 her both the children suffered from the whooping cough. Annie Besant nursed them day and night and her son, Digby, recovered soon but her daughter,

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", p.180.

2. Nethercot, Arthur H: 'The First Five Lives of Annie Besant'. p.46.

Mabel, having very delicate and weak constitution, due to pre-mature birth, remained fighting with death. With a constant hard labour of Annie Besant, Mabel also recovered but once she was out of danger Annie Besant herself collapsed physically and lay in bed for a week unmoving and struggled for three years and two months. This struggle, writes Annie Besant "transformed me from a Christian into an Athiest. The agony of the struggle was in the first nineteen months.....a hell to live through at the time.....Nothing but an imperious intellectual and moral necessity can drive into doubt a religious mind, for it is as though an earthquake shook the foundation of the soul, and very being quivers and sways under the shock.... The smooth brightness of my previous life made all the disillusionment more startling, and the sudden plunge into conditions so new and so favourable dazed and stunned me. My religious past became the worst enemy of the suffering present. All my personal belief in Christ, and my intense faith in His constant direction of affairs, all my habit of continual prayer and of realization of His presence.... all were against me now. The very height of my trust was the measure of the shock when the trust gave way".¹ To Annie Besant God was not an abstract idea but a living reality.

1. Annie Besant: 'An Autobiography', pp. 185-188.

Annie Besant further writes "All my heart rose up against this Person in whom I believed, and whose individual finger I saw in my baby's agony, my own misery, the breaking of my mother's proud heart under a load of debt, and all the bitter suffering of the poor. The presence of pain and evil in a world made by a good God; the pain falling on the innocent, as on my seven months' old babe; the pain begun here reaching on into eternity unhealed; a sorrow-laden world; a lurid, hopeless hell; all these, while I still believed, drove me desperate, and instead of like the devils believed and hated. All the hitherto dormant and unsuspected strength of my nature rose up in rebellion; I did not yet dream of denial, but I would no longer kneel".¹

When the physical crisis was over Annie Besant decided to act on her own lines. She writes "I resolved to take christianity as it had been taught in the churches, and carefully and thoroughly examine its dogmas one by one, so that I should never again say "I believe" where I had not proved, and that, however diminished my area of belief, that was left of it might at least be firm under my feet".² Annie Besant found four problems pressing for immediate solution. She believed that people like her would also be

1. Ibid. p.188.

2. Ibid. pp.195-196.

facing such problems and disputing every inch of their old ground of faith with the steadily advancing waves of historical and scientific criticism. These problems were:-

1. The eternity of punishment after death.
2. The meaning of "goodness" and "love" as applied to God who had made this world, with all its sin and misery.
3. The nature of atonement of Christ, and the "Justice" of God in accepting a vicarious suffering from Christ, and a vicarious righteousness from the sinner.
4. The meaning of "inspiration" as applied to the Bible, and the reconciliation of the perfections of the author with the blunders and immoralities of the work".¹

Annie Besant had not brought into question some other vital problems of religion which also needed some solution by her. These problems were, the deity of Christ, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and other similar problems, taken by her after her legal separation from her husband.

After making her resolve, not to kneel before God,

1. Annie Besant: 'Autobiographical Sketches', p.55.

there was no more doubt so far as Annie Besant's position towards the Church was concerned. She made a definite mind to leave it and "was willing to make the leaving as little obtrusive as possible".¹ Annie Besant was ready to attend the Church services but to withdraw herself from the 'Holy Communion' because in that service, full of the recognition of Jesus as Deity, she could not join without hypocrisy.

In July or August 1873 the crisis came. Annie Besant was told by her husband, Frank Besant, to conform to the outward observances of the Church, and attend the Communion. Annie Besant refused. "Then came", writes Annie Besant "the distinct alternative; conformity or exclusion from home - in other words, hypocrisy or expulsion".² Annie Besant chose the latter.

Annie Besant left her husband's house for good and thus her marriage tie was broken. Her mother's tears and pleading could not soften Annie Besant. She writes "I had been rigid as steel, but it was hard to remain steadfast when my darling mother, whom I loved as I loved nothing else on earth, threw herself on her knees before me, imploring me to yield. It seemed like a crime to bring such anguish on her; and I felt as a murderer as the snowy head was pressed against my knees. And yet - to live a lie?

1. Ibid. p.69.

2. Annie Besant: 'An Autobiography'. p.215.

Not even for her was that shame possible; in that worst crisis of blinding agony my will clung fast to Truth".¹ Annie Besant's mother was heart broken because she knew well that young Annie hardly of twenty-six years was inexperienced to face the difficulties of the future life.

Annie Besant had obtained her freedom with a great price, she writes "I was free. Home, friends, social position, were the price demanded and paid, and, being free I wondered what to do with my freedom".²

Annie Besant did many experiments to earn her bread. She possessed a small monthly income sufficient for only respectable starvation. She tried fancy needle work, and worked as a governess in a house where she had also to cook meals and sweep the rooms. She turned her jewellery and superfluous clothes into more necessary articles for her young girl, Mabel, so that she may not suffer a solitary touch of want.

In 1874 her mother died. The house was left to Annie Besant and her daughter totally desolated. The shock of the death was very severe to Annie Besant. The two months after the death were the most difficult for Annie Besant.

1. Ibid. pp.215-216.

2. Ibid. p.216.

In 1878 Annie Besant was deprived of her little daughter, Mabel. The deed of separation of Annie Besant from her husband had assigned her to have the custody of Mabel. While Annie Besant was busy in a case¹, a copy of petition was served to her which deprived her of her child's custody. The petition read "The said Annie Besant is by addresses, lectures, and writings, endeavouring to propagate the principles of Atheism, and has published a book entitled: "The Gospel of Atheism". She has also associated herself with an infidel lecturer and author, named Charles Bradlaugh, in giving lectures and in publishing books and pamphlets, whereby the truth of the Christian religion is impeached, and disbelief in all religion is inculcated.

"The said Annie Besant has also, in conjunction with the said Charles Bradlaugh, published an indecent and obscene pamphlet called 'The Fruits of Philosophy'.²

The petition was heard before the Master of Rolls, Sir George Jessel, who was a man animated by the old spirit of Hebrew bigotry. He dealt the case roughly, coarsely, unfairly and decided the case against Annie Besant. Mr. Ince, the counsel on the other side argued an unfit

1. The Knowlton Pamphlet Case, has been explained under the sub-head - 'The success of her early experiments'.

2. Annie Besant: Autobiographical Sketches, p.159.

that Atheism and Malthusianism made Annie Besant an unfit guardian for her child and declared that Mabel, if educated by Annie Besant would "be helpless for good in this world and hopeless for good hereafter".¹ Annie Besant argued her case in person but all her arguments fell on deaf ears. Annie Besant writes, "The absolute right of the father being declared, and a married mother held to have no sort of claim over her own children. The worst stigma affixed to marriage by the law of England is this ignoring of any right of the married mother to her child; the law protects the unmarried, but insults the married, mother, and places in the hands of the legal husband an instrument of torture whose power to agonise depends on the tenderness and strength of the motherliness of the wife. In fact the law says to every woman: "Choose which of these two positions you will have: if you are legally your husband's wife you can have no legal claim to your children; if legally you are your husband's mistress, then your rights as mother are secure".²

The separation of the child made Annie Besant to resolve neither to see nor to write to her daughter until she was old enough to understand and judge for herself, Annie Besant writes, "I live in the hope that in her womanhood she may return to the home she was torn

1. Ibid. p.161.

2. Ibid. pp.167-168.

from in her childhood".¹

With the verdict of Sir George Jessel the tragic chapter in her life seemed to have been closed, but it was not so. It left a black mark on her heart. Her health gave way and after many years when she wrote her 'Autobiographical Sketches', she could not forget Sir George Jessel's brutality robbing her of her daughter. Annie Besant could never forgive Jessel even after his death, she writes "I have never forgiven Sir George Jessel, and I never shall, though his death has left me only his memory to hate".² It will not be very surprising to know that during the years that followed the legal separation with her daughter Annie Besant felt, spoke and wrote bitterly of the pseudo-Christianity in whose name such things were done.

(5) The Success of Early Experiments:

It will not be out of place to consider here what would have happened if Annie Besant had not succeeded in her earlier experiments when she was passing through different social, political and religious movements of England. Sufferings, no doubt, improve the character of a person to a great extent, unless they do not completely overpower that individual. Whatever Annie Besant

1. Ibid. p.169.

2. Ibid. p.77.

ability, however strongly her mind, it would have been really of no profit, if her early experiments had proved a complete failure. Though she had to undergo difficulties of temporary nature, yet she was successful in most of her experiments she made both in England and in India. Here some experiments, made by her in early years of life, need a detailed mention.

1 - Annie Besant's First Speech: On July 23, 1924, speaking at Queen's Hall - Jubilee Demonstration to Dr. Annie Besant, the great playwright George Bernard Shaw had said, "At this time Mrs. Besant was the greatest orator in England and possibly in Europe. I have never heard her excelled,"¹ but this excellence in delivering her speech was only revealed to Annie Besant when she made her first experiment to speak in the spring of 1873, when still at Sibsey with her husband. One day, being securely locked up in the great silent church, where she had gone to practise some organ exercises, Annie Besant tried to speak from the pulpit.

Explaining her successful venture in making her first speech Annie Besant writes, "I ascended the pulpit in the big, empty, lonely church, and there and then I delivered my first lecture. I shall never forget the

1. Shaw, George Bernard: "Mrs. Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism" - article in 'The Annie Besant Centenary Book', p. 19.

feeling of power and of delight which came upon me as my voice rolled down the aisles, and the passion in me broke into balanced sentences, and never paused for rhythmical expression, while I felt that all I wanted was to see the church full of upturned faces, instead of the emptiness of the silent pews. And as though in a dream the solitude became peopled, and I saw the listening faces and the eager, eyes, and as the sentences came unbidden from my lips, and my own tones echoed back to me from the pillars of the ancient church, I knew of a verity that the gift of speech was mine, and that if ever - and it seemed then so impossible - if ever the chance came to me of public work, that at least this power of melodious utterance should win hearing for any message I had to bring".¹

Annie Besant kept a secret, about this power in speech making, for many months, she also felt it a thing of shame, rather than of pride, of foolish speechifying in an empty church. But that success in making first speech can trace out Annie Besant's mental growth that how that ordinary striving after that expression in spoken words later on had become to her one of the deepest delights of life.

1. Annie Besant: 'Autobiographical Sketches', p.72.

2- The case of Knowlton Pamphlet: Charles Knowlton, a Massachusetts doctor, had written a work with a title "The Fruits of Philosophy", the word "philosophy" being used more loosely than 'social science'. Its sub-title had somewhat guardedly given away its real content and purpose: 'The Private Companion of Young Married People'. This pamphlet was in accordance to with the Malthusian Principle of Population. Malthus had asserted that the world's population, if uncontrolled, would increase in geometrical proportion, whereas its food supply would increase only arithmetically. Malthus predicted dire consequences for mankind if man himself did not quickly find means to decrease the birth rate. Malthus, while concluding his thesis, suggested that it was birth itself that must be controlled and man's incontinence must be curbed.¹

The Knowlton pamphlet supported a planned family, in the spirit of Malthusian principle, "as over-large families among persons of limited incomes imply either pauperism, or lack of necessary food, clothing, education, and fair start in life children".² Dr. Knowlton advocated the restriction of the number of the family within the means of existence, and stated the means by which this

1. Malthus, Rev. Thomas R: "An Essay on the Principle of Population as it affects the Future Improvement of Society", an anonymous book, 1798.

2. Annie Besant: 'Autobiographical Sketches', p.112.

restriction should be carried out.

The Knowlton pamphlet was branded at Bristol as an obscene publication. Annie Besant, assisted by Charles Bradlaugh, determined to republish the Knowlton pamphlet in order to test the right of publication of such a book which would relieve people from poverty, the mother of crimes and would make happy homes where only want and suffering reigned. Annie Besant believed "that on all questions affecting the happiness of the people, whether they be theological, political, or social, fullest right of free discussion ought to be maintained at all hazards".¹ Annie Besant did not endorse fully the medical views given in the pamphlet, she published it because she definitely understood that "progress can only be made through discussion, and no discussion is possible where different opinions are suppressed".² Moreover the policy of the "National Reformer" newspaper, of which Annie Besant was the joint editor, was "atheistic in theology, republican in politics and Malthusian in social economy" and thus the Knowlton Pamphlet was republished by Annie Besant with full knowledge of the consequences.

To the pamphlet Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh supplied the following preface: "We believe with the

1. Ibid. p. 121. Preface to the Knowlton pamphlet, written jointly by Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh.

2. Ibid. p. 121.

Rev. Mr. Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of existence, and that 'some' checks must therefore exercise control over population; the checks now exercised are semi-starvation and preventible disease; the enormous mortality among the infants of the poor is one of the checks which now keeps down the population. The checks that ought to control population are scientific, and it is these which we advocate. We think it more moral to prevent the conception of children, than, after they are born, to murder them by want of food, air and clothing. We advocate scientific checks to population because so long as poor men have large families, pauperism is a necessity, and from pauperism grow crime and disease".¹

Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh further wrote in the Preface that "The wage which would support the parents and two or three children in comfort and decency is utterly insufficient to maintain a family of twelve or fourteen and we consider it a crime to bring into the world human beings doomed to misery or to premature death. It is not only the hand-working classes which are concerned in this question. The poor curate, the struggling man of business, the young professional man, are often made wretched for life by their inordinately large families, and their years are passed in one long battle to live;

1. Ibid. p.122.

meanwhile the woman's health is sacrificed and her life embittered from the same cause. To all of these, we point the way of relief and of happiness; for the sake of these we publish that others fear to issue, and we do it, confident that if we fail the first time, we shall succeed at last, and that the English public will not permit the authorities to stifle a discussion of the most important social question which can influence a nation's welfare".¹

On April 5, 1877 both the publishers, Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, were arrested for publishing and selling the Knowlton pamphlet, considered to be obscene literature.

While the Knowlton case was dragging on through the courts, Annie Besant, in order to support her case, wrote a series of articles entitled: "Does Not the Bible Come Within the Ruling of the Lord Chief Justice as to Obscene Literature" (later published in condensed form entitled "Is the Bible Indetable?"), while the appeal was pending Annie Besant brought out her own booklet on the subject of birth control, which she said would be written in a less 'coarse' style than Knowlton's and yet preserve its chief purposes. Her pamphlet entitled

1. Ibid. p.122.

"The Law of Population: Its consequences and Its Bearing Upon Human Conduct and Morals" soon superseded Knowlton.

It took Annie Besant more than ten months to win the Knowlton case. On February 12, 1878 the final judgement was given in the favour of the publishers and they triumphed and were set legally free. The paper, 'Secular Review' commending on the victory published flattering biographical sketches of both Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh with photographs.

Annie Besant's success in the Knowlton case was not only her individual success but it was also a resounding triumph for the freedom of the press and a turning point in the history of birth control. As a result of Annie Besant's success and efforts, in 1879 Dr. Aletta Jacobs, a lady doctor, opened the world's first birth-control clinic in Holland and this movement spread all over the world.

3-Match Girls Strike: The period 1884-1886 marked to a certain extent a turning in Annie Besant from politics to practical social issues, to a study of the actual conditions under which the working classes of the country lived. These were not unknown to Annie Besant but she had never before faced them deliberately; she was striving to recognize the realities of the social system of England. She visited factories, slums and work-houses, and wrote

in her papers of what she found there. She influenced the Fabians to make schemes for discussing the working conditions of the poor.

Soon Annie Besant visited a match factory, Bryant and May, which paid an enormous dividends to the shareholders and very low wages to the match-workers. Annie Besant drew an immediate attention of the Fabian Society to the wages paid by the factory. She herself interviewed some of the girl workers, got lists of their wages, their fines and their family conditions. She published all these facts and called for a boycott Bryant and May's matches. A strike was arranged for few days in the Fleet Street. Annie Besant wrote articles, roused the clubs, held public meetings, got Charles Bradlaugh to ask questions in the Parliament, stirred up constituencies in which share holders were members, till the whole country rang with the struggle. Annie Besant influenced George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb and other active Fabians to work for the match-girls. Finally London Trade Council was made to act as arbitrators and thus a satisfactory settlement was arrived at. The match-girls went back to their work on better wages and good working conditions. A Matchmakers' Union was established, a strong woman's Trade Union in England and for years Annie Besant acted as Secretary.

The situation in the match factory became so congenial later on that Annie Besant asked for a match-girls

drawing-room having "a piano, tables of papers, for games, for light literature; so that it may offer a bright, home like refuge to those girls",¹ who had no real homes, no play grounds save the street.

Knowing about Annie Besant's success² in the match-girls strike, the tin-box makers, chain makers, fur-pullers, omnibus and tramway men approached her for getting help in solving their working and organizational problems.

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1. Annie Besant: 'An Autobiography' p.437.
 2. Annie Besant's success, as a helper of the poor, caught the eye of an English poet, Gerald Massey who saw that Annie Besant, though an atheist was always championing the cause of the oppressed and he wrote a poem which is more striking because he had never met Annie Besant, he only knew about her. But in his poem he gave as brilliant a description of Annie Besant as has ever been given:

Annie Besant: A Greeting
By Gerald Massey

Annie Besant, brave and dear,
May some message uttered here
Reach you, ringing golden clear.

Though we stand not side by side
In the front of battle wide,
Oft I think of you with pride.

Fellow soldier in the fight.
Oft I see you flash by night
Fiery hearted for the right.

You for others sow the grain;
Yours the tears of ripening rain;
Theirs the smiling harvest gain.

Fellow workers, we shall be,
Workers for eternity;
Such my faith. And you shall see

Contd.....

4-Election to the London School Board: During 1885

Annie Besant came to Tower Hamlets to seek the suffrages of the people as a candidate for the London School Board. She was elected in November as a Social Democrat, Secularist and a Champion of Trade Union Wages. It was a fierce contest, in which one clerical opponent, the Rev. Edwyn Hoskyns, the vicar of Stepney, hit Annie Besant below the belt by flooding his parish with thirty thousand anonymous handbills which contained baseless passages against Annie Besant; but Annie Besant headed the poll by a majority of nearly three thousand votes.

(Contd...from page 198)

Lif's no bubble blown of breath
To delude the sight till death,
Whatsoe'er the unseeing saith.

Love that closes dying eyes,
Wakes them too, in glad surprise,
Love that makes forever wise.

Soul - whilst murmuring, "There's no soul" -
Shall upspring like flame from coal.
Death is not life's final goal.

Bruno lives. Such spirit's come
Swords immortal, tempered from
Fire and Forge of Martyrdom.

You have soul enough for seven;
Life enough the earth to leaven;
Love enough to create heaven.

One of God's own faithful few,
Whilst unknowing it are you,
Annie Besant, bravely true.

Annie Besant was placed on the committee she had asked for: School management, works and by-laws. At Christmas time Annie filled her "Notes" column with case histories of starving families, exploited boys and girls, absenteeism from school because of child labour and infinitesimal wages. George Lansbury declares: "The next few years of her life and work amongst the most successful of any she has lived, for she secured by sheer persistence and personal endeavour a much higher standard of education for our children; but more important than all questions of reading, writing and arithmetic, it was her work which threw into prominence the absurdity of trying to educate half-starving children, and laid the foundation for the splendid system of medical examination and treatment now existing in all our elementary schools, coupled with the establishment of feeding centres".¹ By the end of 1889 Annie Besant herself boasted proudly that she had been the means of raising £185 to provide some thirty-six thousand lunches for needy children.

Annie Besant did a very remarkable work in the London School Board but she resigned from the Board after joining the Theosophical Society.

1. Lansbury, George: 'Annie Besant As a Politician'. An article in "Dr. Annie Besant: Fifty Years in Public Work", pp. 10-11.

Annie Besant's success in the early experiments made her to take up many hard pursuits in her later age. Her opening the Central Hindu College Benares, in spite of very unsympathetic orthodox views of the people, shows her considerable success. Her launching the 'Home Rule League' movement in India and establishing 'The Society for the Promotion of National Education' with a 'National University' at Adyar under the Chacellorship of Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, won her a universal applause.

Her trials to follow Truth throughout her long life, made her to experience a variety of strange experiments. The height of her success can be measured by the very high regards to her by those who have always fought against her in her social, religious and political struggles.

(5) The Outer Appearance of Annie Besant's Philosophy:

Annie Besant's thought, as we have already referred to, was very rich and varied. She had enriched the several angles of philosophy - education, politics, religion - with great wisdom and had explained her philosophy as a historian. Her unique character derived its material from the fact that she was a historian of Indian culture possessing the art of a philosopher to handle the intricate problems. In this aspect of her versatility she presented a sign of her great vision. Annie Besant tried to explain a special line

of thought which enabled her to pull the different strings of philosophy, one by one, in constructing a meaningful school of thought. Therefore it would be worthwhile to examine the outer appearance of Annie Besant's philosophy for having a fuller understanding of her thought.

Annie Besant as a Historian of Indian Philosophy:

Like any serious historian of any subject Annie Besant tried to handle the facts of the past of Indian philosophy in order to reconstruct a history of the present time on the bases of spiritual heritage, legends, achievements of the past and continuing traditions of the philosophical minded people of so many centuries to awaken Indian people to the greatness of India's past and the possible future. Annie Besant with a thorough study of Indian culture and life, tried, in the words of Sri Prakasa, "to discover our own country"¹ for us and, as C. Rajgopalchariar said, help "young India to feel sure of the greatness of Indian culture and religion".²

Annie Besant constantly made us aware, through speeches and articles, that we should not look upon our ancient culture as a static ruin and, in our difficulties

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1. Prakasa, Sri: "Annie Besant through an Indian Child's Eyes", an article in the 'Annie Besant Centenary Book', p.57.
 2. Rajgopalchariar, C: "Annie Besant and the Revival of Religion in India", an article in the Annie Besant Centenary Book, p.58.

and despair, throw away the rich and accumulated experiences of the past into the heap of dust, considering it merely a putrid waste. Till her last day of life, writes Dr. Iqbal Narain Gurtu, Annie Besant "kept on reminding us that if India would be regenerated, purified and respiritualised, she (India) would become the 'priest-people of Humanity' and achieve her proper destiny".¹

By applauding the India of the past, Annie Besant did not approve of the idea of re-introducing to the present fully what had been in the ancient times. She was aware of the fact that India could not be reconstructed if we "tread only in the foot-prints of the past".² She warned us not to be afraid to tread a new path. In her speech entitled "The India of Tomorrow", she says "The strange thing is that often men cling most passionately to the forms which do not really belong to the life.....Co-operate in the building of the forms, and if a form does not succeed it will be broken; and you should be glad in the breaking of the useless form as you should be glad in the form that means success".³ Annie Besant further says "Trust life, that is the great lesson for these days of change, for change is coming, change from every side. Those changes that are good will endure, and you must be very patient

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1. Gurtu, Iqbal Narain: 'The Messenger of Hope', an article in Centenary Book, p.72.
 2. Annie Besant: "The India of Tomorrow" an article in 'Builders of New India', p.487.
 3. Annie Besant: 'India's Awakening' a lecture given in 'The Birth of New India, pp.24-25.

while they are in the making".¹

Annie Besant's Principles of Historical Study of Philosophy:

Annie Besant framed some important principles for making a historical study of the philosophy of a country. In the Theosophical Review of 1910 Annie Besant explained these principles which are as follows:-

"1. No past condition of a nation can be reproduced, for a nation cannot re-tread the path along which it has evolved. Principles can be re-established, but the application of them must be adapted to the new environment.

2. A national ideal to be useful must be in harmony with the national character, and must grow out of the national past. It must be a native of the soil, not an exotic.

3. Every nation has its own line of evolution, and any attempt to make it follow the line of evolution of another nation would be disastrousThe world exists for the evolution of the Soul, and for this evolution varieties of experience are necessary. Races, sub-races, families, nations, like the two sexes, subserve evolution by their differences, and offer the variety of soil and culture which brings out the varied capacities of the Soul".²

1. Ibid. p.25.

2. Annie Besant: 'Builder of New India', p.233.

Annie Besant applied these principles in studying Indian philosophy and religion. She wanted to rebuild the India of the future on the foundation of the Indian life of the past, so that a mighty and spiritual organization may be built up for the uplift of humanity as a whole. "Her first work, therefore," writes Dr. Iqbal Narain Gurtu, "in India was to attempt to revive her faith in spiritual awakening. We know how assiduously she worked for it and how eloquently she described the grandeur and sublimity of India's ancient ideals which were almost lost in the mist of antiquity".¹

In the lecture, which Annie Besant delivered on board, the *Kaisar-Hind*, in the Indian Ocean, while coming to India for the first time, on November 6, 1893, she said "To me she (India) in very truth the Holy Land, the land whose great philosophy has been the source of all the philosophies of the western world, the land whose great religion has been the origin of all religions, the mother of spirituality, the cradle of civilization. When I think of India, I think of her in the greatness of her past, not in the degradation of her present. For to-day but few of her children know anything of her great philosophy. To the mass of her people her mighty religion is veiled,

1. Gurtu, Iqbal Narain: 'The Messenger of Hope' an article in the Annie Besant Centenary Book, pp. 73-74.

becoming to the ignorant many a superstition, to the cultivated few but a poetical allegory. No longer the very life of the people, it is a form rather than a spirit".¹

Annie Besant further said, "So India fallen is the India of the present, while the India to which I would win your thoughts to-night is India unfallen, India as she was in her past, as she shall be in her future - mother once more in days to come, as in the days behind us, of art and of knowledge, mother of spiritual life and of true religion. That is the India I know; that is the India which has given to us the literature that I am going to say something of to-night; the India whose polity was built by King-Initiates, whose religion was moulded by divine men, the India which even so late as five thousand years ago felt her fields trodden by the feet of Shri Krishna, which even twenty-four centuries ago heard her cities echoing with the sublime morality of the Buddha; the India which later, when her great wars were over, had her poets who in the Mahabharata and in the Ramayana gave epic poetry to the world greater than that of Greece; dramatists who in later times still left treasures of beauty that the learned in the west are just beginning to appreciate. That is the India of which I have to speak - the India which as I said, is to me the Holy Land".²

1. Annie Besant: "India: Her Past and Her Future" an article in 'The Birth of New India' p.37.

2. Annie Besant: "India: Her Past and Her Future" in The Birth of New India, pp.37-38.

Annie Besant's great love for India and deep devotion to Indian Culture made her to study the past heritage of Indian philosophy and religions. She, very carefully, studied the Indian history and philosophy of the ancient days and tried to bring out some lesson for the present and future. Her passionate appeal to young students of the Central Hindu College Benares, at one of the anniversary meetings of that institution, gives a glimpse of the vision of her spiritual lesson for Indian students. She said, "Aim at progress, my sons, strive to make India's future worthy of her ancient greatness. Outgrow your fathers in knowledge, outstrip your elders in devotion. For the days of India's greatness are by no means over; her future shall be mightier than her mighty past. India shall wield a power greater than the Imperial, if only her people will realize her true strength and utilize it, leading a life in which Spirit shall guide and love shall inspire".¹

Annie Besant's Methods in Pursuing the Historical Study of Indian Philosophy:-

There are two methods in pursuing a historical study of Philosophy. One is to use the past as a basis for understanding the needs of the present and the other method

1. Annie Besant: (edited) The Central Hindu College, Magazine, 1911, article in "Annie Besant: Builder of New India". p. 490.

is to treat the past as past and understand it as a historical fact of antiquity. Annie Besant makes use of the former method which makes Annie Besant a versatile philosophical historian of Indian philosophy rather than merely an academic historian. Her method of work is easily discernible from her one of the lectures, when she says "The present moment is peculiarly opportune.....to awaken public feeling by urging ideals, by appealing to the greatness of the past, as an inspiration for effort in the present, to create greatness in the future".¹ For reconstructing the Indian philosophy on some sure grounds, for the use of Indians, Annie Besant implored upon the use of 'impassioned rhetoric' to awaken the sleeping, to arouse the idolant, to stimulate the slothful and to inspire with hope the Indian people who despaired of the future of India.

To study history on these lines Annie Besant did not resort to merely description and exposition of the India's past history but she tried to develop a constructive synthesis between the passionate description of the greatness of the past, the understanding of the true import of religions and also the impact of the factual knowledge of the ancient truth on the present time for a true regeneration of the country. Her lectures entitled: 'In defence of Hinduism', 'India's Awakening', 'India: her past and

1. Annie Besant: 'Self-Government: Let us Reason Together', New India Pamphlet No.1. p.1.

her future', 'The Need for Ideals', 'Sri Ram Chandra - the Ideal King'. The Ancient Indian Ideals of Duty' etc. exhibit her treatment of the method.

The second method of treating the past as past, nothing less and nothing more, does not receive any approval by Annie Besant. Her approach to understand the past history is to use it for the present and future needs. The following quotation, from her one of the speeches, will explain her method in pursuing the historical study when she says. "If you go into Indian history at all, you will at once realize that the Nation that built up that history so many thousands of years ago, is a nation with a typical life of its own. It is capable of steady and constant evolution today".¹ Annie Besant favoured that Indian people must turn back to the literature of the past, to the philosophy and the religion of her great days for inspiration and hope for the re-awakening of the present and future, because hope for a bright present has its essence in the greatness of the past.

History of Philosophy as Philosophy:

It is not an easy task to discover philosophy in its history. It needs a deep and critical understanding of the philosophical ideas in the writings of the past philosophers and also a knowledge of the personal background of

1. Annie Besant: "Self-Governing India" an article in "The Builder of New India", p.26.

the philosophers so that a full import of their words may be grasped. As all philosophers are, to some extent, creatures of their times and their philosophies are conditioned by the circumstances which prevail at that time; so Annie Besant is in no way exception to this rule. She tried to answer the question of life which her time put to her. "No philosopher", writes Aldous Huxley, "is completely disinterested. The pure love of truth is always mingled to some extent with the need, consciously or unconsciously felt by even the noblest and most intelligent philosophers, to justify a given form of personal or social behaviour, to rationalize the traditional prejudices of a given class or community. The philosopher who finds meaning in the world is concerned, not only to elucidate that meaning, but also to prove that it is most clearly expressed in some established religion, some accepted code of morals".¹

Annie Besant followed a method of reconstructing the philosophies of the past in their own environment to build a system of their philosophy to suit the present need of the Society. Annie Besant was not an arm chair historical academician but a mystical Karmayogin² or a practical idealist with a definite meaning and purpose of history in view. She was not destined to write merely a

1. Huxley, Aldous: "Ends and Means". p.272.

2. Datta, Hirenāra Nath: "Mrs. Besant as Karmayogin" an article in 'Theosophy in India, October 1931, p.201.

HISTORY of old times but to discover the philosopher himself rather than the outline facts of his philosophical thought. In attaining this aim Annie Besant was very successful as she brought back to life the great seers of the Upanishads, the great philosophical reformers like Sri Krishana and Buddha, the great epic personalities like Ram Chandra and the great law givers like Manu. While discussing the lives and philosophical works of the great celebrities of the past Annie Besant never hesitated to enter upon any controversial issue of any philosopher but tried to offer a thought provoking and daring solution to their weak points.

But despite her very laudable efforts to explain the philosophy of Indian thinkers, Annie Besant had made some glaring mistakes in her explanations. She, most probably unknowingly, treated the philosophers of ancient India look alike and say somewhat the same thing. Her Buddha or Sri Krishna or Ram Chandra look so much similar that the special uniqueness and individual personality of any of these celebrities cannot be very ably grasped. The reason for this sort of errors in her philosophical exposition can be searched out in her over-busy engagements in the educational, political, social and religious movements of her time. Being a practical philosopher Annie Besant was busy in all her pursuits to serve humanity in all its

aspects. Theodore Besterman, her biographer, criticises her thought when he says "Abstraction, generalization, philosophical thought, even analytical acuteness were beyond her; and.....repeatedly fallible was her judgement".¹

The hostile criticism of Besterman does not dwarf the high stature of Annie Besant as a historian of philosophy. It is true that the interpretation of history of ancient philosophy does not receive a systematic consideration in the hands of Annie Besant and the exposition of it is not very authentic, but it must not be forgotten that Annie Besant was not writing the history of Indian philosophy with the aim of explaining the trivial issues of philosophical thought. Her necessity in writing the Indian philosophy was for, in the words of Bishop Arundale "the revival of ancient spirit in religion".² Her aim in studying Indian philosophy and writing on the age old epic period was only for inspiring Indians, writes Muthulakshmi Reddi "in favour of Hindu thought and culture at a time when India's own sons and daughters were becoming strangers to their own religion and culture and were beginning to think that their ancestors were barbarians and forgetting to learn even their own mother tongue, much less the language of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It was Dr. Annie

1. Besterman, Theodore: "Mrs. Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet" p.269.

2. Arundale, G.S.: "A Survey of the Life of Annie Besant", p.25.

Besant who translated in simple and pure English not only the Gita, but also compiled small book-lets containing tales of Aryan greatness for the use of boys and girls. That was how the whole world came to know India's spiritual treasures which were engulfed in centuries of darkness and oblivion. She was the one who brought the light and illumined the hidden treasures of Indian thought".¹

We may have been either right or wrong in judging Annie Besant as a philosopher of history or a historian of philosophy; it is open to approval, to criticism and to reprobation; but we cannot deny the fact about her tender heart, her earnest and disinterested labour and her laborious self-sacrificing life in justifying India's great religious and rich philosophy as an inseparable part of the life of India.

(C)

Causes that led to Annie Besant's Arrival in
India in 1893.

Annie Besant put her foot on Indian soil for the first time on November 16, 1893 at 10.24 A.M. and the place was the tiny coastal town of Tuticorin in the south. She wanted to come to India earlier in 1891 and 1892 but as two conditions necessary for her coming to India were

1. Reddi, S. Muthulakshmi: "The Religious and Social Reformer", an article in the 'Annie Besant Centenary Book' p. 60.

not fulfilled - Medical assurance that her health would bear the Indian hot climate, and enough money to cover the cost of tour and other payments to be made by her - so, she did not come. The physician had frightened her by telling that if she went to India and lectured as proposed, she would not return alive. It was believed that already overstrained by the hard and heavy work of the year that fell on Annie Besant, the hot and bracing climate of India, the arduous sea-voyage and the complete change of life conditions would not be congenial to Annie Besant and these opinions were enough to delay her visit. But her desire to come to India was so intense that though necessary money to meet her immediate expenses had not been raised and physician's advice about her health had not been sought, yet Annie Besant at last came to India in 1893.

It would not be sufficient to say that because Annie Besant wanted to come to India, so she came. There were some authentic recognized causes which influenced her attitude of mind and brought her to India, a country totally new for her. The causes may be summed up as:-

1. Interest in Indian situation,
2. Theosophical Work,
3. Call for Educational Renaissance, and
4. Attachment by Previous Incarnations.

Each of these causes had had its share in influencing Annie Besant's life and work. Her study of the Indian Philosophy and Culture had quickened the rate of her love for India and proposed her to come to India, which was "the Holy Land" for her.

1. Interest in Indian Situation: Annie Besant had a great interest in India. Her interest was not created by her adoption of Theosophy. A full ten years before she joined the Theosophical Society in 1889, saw her entering a passionate defence of India against the policy of Lord Disraeli in England and Lord Lytton in India. In 1879 Annie Besant published through her Freethought Publishing House, a pamphlet entitled "England, India and Afghanistan or why the Tory Government gags the Indian Press: A Plea for the Weak against the Strong".

Anticipating protest against her criticism of England's conduct in India, Annie Besant wrote in her pamphlet: "It is said to be unpatriotic to blame one's country. But not so have I read England's noblest patriots. Love of England does not mean approval and endorsement of the policy of some Oriental adventurer whom chance and personal ability and unscrupulousness have raised to power. Love of England means reverence of her past, work for her future; it means sympathy with all that is noble and great in her history, and endeavour to

render her yet more noble, yet more great; it means triumph in her victories over oppression, delight in her growing freedom, glory in her encouragement of all nations struggling towards liberty;.....it means condemnation of her bullying, boasting, cruel imperialism..and regretful remorseful turning back to the old paths of duty, honour, and of faith.

"Therefore this plea of mine for the weak against the strong is not an unpatriotic attack on our own beloved land, but rather the loving effort of a child to save a mother whose honour and whose life are threatened by unscrupulous betrayers".¹

Annie Besant's previous associate in Free-thought movement, Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., who had a great sympathy for India and whose pro-Indian attitude was freely known in the house of commons,² was invited in 1889 by the Indian National Congress to attend its fifth annual session. A warm welcome was accorded to Bradlaugh, his name was kept on many roads, parks and halls, and he was received as a guest of honour in many cities of India.

1. Annie Besant: "England, India and Afghanistan", pp. 102-3.

2. Sitaramayya, B. Pattabhi: "The History of the Indian National Congress", p. 80. "Bradlaugh prepared in 1889 a draft Bill on the Reform of the Legislative Councils and circulated it. It embodies the views of the Congress as expressed till then, and the Congress in accordance with his wishes drafted certain proposals embodying the mature opinion of the Indian people on the subject. The Bill was dropped later. But Bradlaugh's position in Parliament was so strong..... his second Bill was accepted".

The story of a great honour given by Indians to Bradlaugh reached Annie Besant. Her interest in India and Indian situations greatly increased by the news and verbal discussions with Bradlaugh. Enchanted by the glorious records of Bradlaugh's winning laurels in India, Annie Besant persuaded H.P.B. to allow her to visit India in 1890, but due to her bad health and sudden death of H.P.B. that plan could not mature. At that time one English paper, 'St. Stephen's Review' reported that Annie Besant would also go to India and that "she had already engaged the services of a Moonshiee to teach her Hindustani and Sanskrit".¹

2. Theosophical Work: Annie Besant must be drawn towards India for doing work for Theosophy, as her biographer Geoffrey West writes: By any reckoning the Theosophical must be declared the most important of all influences in Mrs. Besant's life, if only because it brought her to India, the scene.....of some of her most enduring labours. India was, of course, the Headquarters of the Society and the home of the Masters".²

It is very easy, but interesting, to form a connection between Theosophy and Annie Besant's social and political work. Annie Besant spent all her earlier life

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: "The First Five Lives of Annie Besant", p.391.

2. West, Geoffrey: "The Life of Annie Besant", p.203.

in England as merely a preparation for the work her Masters were to set before her in India; and she avowed that in every sphere of action she worked under their guidance. So theosophy brought Annie Besant to India.

Annie Besant made herculean work in India under the banner of Theosophy and Theosophical Society, which did not cease upto her last breath of life. She worked untiringly for social, educational, political, religious and cultural regeneration of the modern India. She wrote pamphlets, stories and books for the inspiration of Indian youth; she founded the Central Hindu College, Benares, schools for the girls and the depressed classes and founded a National University, delivered lectures about Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and different religions of India; she worked for social reform on religious lines and a home-rule movement for India. Her incessant efforts, to arouse whole of India to win freedom, cannot be denied. All these efforts by Annie Besant made her the prophet of Indian Nationalism.

3. Call for Educational Renaissance: Annie Besant's work of teaching classes in the Hall of Science, which was organized by Dr. Aveling and sponsored by Charles Bradlaugh, and her grand work in the London School Board, made many Indian Theosophists to admire her excellent capacity to administer and build educational institutions on Theoso-

phical lines. B.Sanjiva Rao writes: "In the winter of 1891, she was invited by the General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society to come to India, because he found the educated youth of India steeped in materialism, and there was no intellectual basis on which a nobler idealism could be founded. But it was only two years later that Dr. Besant landed on Indian soil".¹

After making a tour of whole of India in 1893-94 Annie Besant definitely realized a need for national education for the Indian people. At Benares she met great Sanskritists and scholars like Dr.Bhagwan Dass, Professor Chakravarthi and Pandit Gangadhara Shastri and understood a great paucity of a Hindu College in northern India which flowered into a full-fledged College in 1898 by the name of Central Hindu College, in the old Aryan style.

Annie Besant's exclusive concern with the educational problems in 1893 may be judged from her farewell message before she left after her first visit to India. Annie Besant said "India that I love and reverence, and would fain see living among the nations, is not an India westernized, rent with the struggles of political parties, heated with the fires of political passions, with a people ignorant and degraded, while those who might have raised them are

1. Rao, B.Sankiva: "Annie Besant: Servant of Humanity", article contributed to special Jubilee Number of August 25, 1924, published by the newspaper, New India, p.41.

fighting for the loaves and fishes of political triumph... The India to which I belong in faith and heat is.....a civilisation in which spiritual knowledge was accounted highest title of honour, and in which the people revered and sought after spiritual truth.....The India I would give my life to help in building is an India learned in the ancient philosophy, pulsing with the ancient religion - an India to which all other lands should look for spiritual life - where the life of all should be materially simple, but intellectually noble and spiritually sublime.. I honestly believe that the future of India, the greatness of India, and the happiness of her people can be secured.... only by the revival of her philosophy and religion. To this, therefore, I must give all my energies".¹

The Central Hindu College, Benares, founded by Annie Besant in 1898, made incessant efforts to revive the ancient philosophy and religion through its education.

4. Attachment by Previous Incarnations: Annie Besant's biographer, Geoffrey West, writes about her that "In becoming a Theosophist she acquired not only an unexpected future but also an unsuspected past".² After joining Theosophical Society Annie Besant, through the use of clairvoyance for research into the past, traced out the

1. Mrs. Besant's farewell message before she left after her first visit, quoted in the book "Mrs. Annie Besant" by Theodore Besterman, pp. 193-94.

2. West, Geoffrey: "The Life of Annie Besant", p. 203.

story of her own forty-six previous lives in succession.

It would be useless to go into the details of all the previous incarnations of Annie Besant as recorded by her. It would be sufficient to mention, in the words of Annie Besant's biographer, Theodore Besterman that "in A.D. 350 Mrs. Besant was incarnated as Hypatia, and in the sixteenth century as Giordano Bruno".¹ Annie Besant was sure that in her immediate previous birth she was born as an Indian.

Kanji Dwarkadas, a close associate of Annie Besant writes "To Mrs. Besant, reincarnation was not just a popular and superstitious belief. She knew it to be a fact. Her previous incarnations were inter alia, Giordano Bruno and Hypatia of Alexandria and she told me that she was a Kashmiri Brahmin and passed away in 1843 to be reborn four years later as Annie Wood".²

Annie Besant gave a characteristic reply on October 12, 1892 to the letter of the Indian Theosophists, Annie Besant wrote: Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you, I to whom India and the Indian peoples seem nearer than the nation to which by birth I belong. In heart I am one with you, and to you by my past I belong. Born

1. Besterman, Theodore: "Mrs. Annie Besant". p.218.

2. Dwarkadas, Kanji: "India's Fight for Freedom: An Eye Witness Story", p.2.

last time under Western skies for work that needs to be done, I do not forget my true motherland, and my inner nature turns eastward ever with filial longing. When Karma opens the door I will walk through it, and we will meet in body as we can already meet in mind".¹

Karma proved propitious and opened the door next year, and Annie Besant walked through it, arriving in India in 1893. How she felt, when her feet touched the Indian soil, has thus been placed on record by Annie Besant, she says "When I landed here for the first time, I knew what love of country meant. For then the whole life came out into flower and taught me the fragrance of the land that is your own, the love of a crowd merely because they are fellow-countrymen, and the feeling that at last you have come to the place you have loved and tried even blindly to serve before yet you have had trodden on its soil".²

Thus all the four causes, explained above, seem responsible for Annie Besant's arrival in India in 1893.

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1. Letter of Annie Besant to the Indian Theosophists, noted by Annie Besant in her "Biographical Notes", pp. 473-74.
 2. quoted by Hirendra Nath Datta in his article "Mrs. Besant as Karmayogin" printed in 'Theosophy in India', Special October Number of 1931.

(D)

Educational Reform Movements underway at the time of Annie Besant's arrival e.g. , Revivalists like Dayananda AND Vivekananda and Modernists like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan:

It would be a thing of great interest to know briefly how far the Indian educational renaissance had taken shape at the time of Annie Besant's arrival in India for the first time. It would require the services of some seasoned historian of Indian education to trace and record in a systematic manner the different educational pursuits, of the late nineteenth century, made by the hands of social and educational reformers of India; nevertheless it is a psychological problem of a very high order, closely connected with the history of Indian civilisation, though not worthy for this stupendous job, I had made an effort, it may seem clumsy one, to explain the educational reform movements under way at the time of Annie Besant's arrival in India.

Annie Besant was 46 years old when she came to India, Dayananda was already assassinated ten years back when he was 59, Vivekananda was 30 and Syed Ahmad Khan 76. All these reformers, though of different age but had one thing in common that they had done a very remarkable spade work for the cause of Indian National education and

had designed some solid educational policies according to their philosophical ideologies, so the educational renaissance of India in that time like India's great Banyan tree, had numerous shoots, which might appear as separate, but had all a common root, a common purpose to educate the common lot of people. Though all these great men were contemporaries but were not fashioned after one pattern. Each one of them had individuality of his own. There could be no single standard by which to measure them all. As no one in this world can remain uninfluenced by the immediate environment in which he grows up and as environment never being the same for all, so these educational reformers developed different qualities in different measure.

One accepted standard in judging great men is to find out the good those men had done to the world, the extent to which they had helped the common people, the level of happiness and prosperity to which they had raised mankind and the intellectual advancement.

In this slender portion we shall make an estimate of the educational pursuits of Dayananda, Vivekananda and Syed Ahmed Khan -- leaving aside the other fields of their social work -- because the scope of the project, in hand, is limited to the educational boundaries. Here

the import to write on these reformers, as educationists, is to understand the educational milieu in India when Annie Besant arrived and worked for diffusion of education.

In order to understand the contribution, of these social thinkers, to the cause of education, we shall separately deal them one by one.

(a) Dayananda (1824-1883)

It was significant that the first great Hindu revivalist, Dayananda Saraswati, was not mere a Hindu reformer but was also an educationist of a very high rank, better to be known as a World Teacher because his mission was not for the good of Hindus but for the uplift of all mankind.

Dayananda denounced the evils prevalent among the Hindus -- the idol-worship, the caste-system, untouchability, child-marriage, enforced widowhood and class privileges. He loved all mankind and his aim was to save men from degradation and falsehood.

Dayananda and his teaching were the products solely of Hindu Shastras and Hindu culture. Writing about Dayananda Har Bilas Sarda says "Foreign Culture, Western Civilization had not the slightest influence in making him what he was. He did not know English and was in no way influenced by European culture or European thought."¹

1. Sarda, Har Bilas: Dayanand Commemoration Volume, Introduction, p.xxxiv.

Before we attempt at the understanding of the educational thought of Dayananda, it would be essential to know a little about his life and work.

Dayananda's early career differed very little from those of other mystics and regional saints of India. Known in early life as Mula Sankar, Dayananda was born in 1824 at Tankara, in Morvi state in Gujarat. He grew up in a well-to-do orthodox Shaivite family. His Sanskrit education began at the age of five and when he was of fourteen years, he had memorized several parts of the Vedas and Panini's Sanskrit grammar. At the age of fourteen he found doubt in the worship of idols¹ and began to meditate upon the instability of human life on the death of his younger sister and old uncle.

Dayananda's parents made arrangements for his marriage, he steadily left home at the age of twenty-one. He adopted the life of an ascetic (sadhu) in order to solve the mystery of life and death. For fourteen years, from 1845 to 1860, he wandered incessantly, all

1. Dayanand: "Autobiography of Pandit Dayanand Sarasvati" pp.5-6. The story of Dayananda's early ~~disbelief~~ about idol-worship has been explained by him in his autobiographical fragment written for the Theosophist journal. He says "I feel it impossible to reconcile the idea of an Omnipotent living God, with this idol, which allows the mice to run over his body and thus suffers his image to be polluted without the slightest protest".

over the upper and larger part of India, like the Buddha, in search of Truth, and until 1860 he could not find any teacher well versed in the Vedas, having a critical approach to popular religious beliefs to satisfy Dayananda's quest and standards.

In 1860 Dayananda found a blind guru, Virjananda, who was an intellectual giant having a great iconoclastic fervour and arbitrary interpretations of the Vedas. Dayananda remained with his guru for nearly four years, at the end of which he took leave of him. "Swami Virjananda charged Dayananda with the duty of devoting himself to the mission of uplifting the country, the rescue of the sacred books, the removal of sectarianism and finally the promulgation of Vedic religion throughout the world".¹ The year 1868 marked the end of Dayananda's seclusion and spiritual searchings and start of his active career of a reformer.

Dayananda was very ambitious thinker as he wanted to bring a sudden new light into Hinduism and inject human values into ossified social customs of his time. Besides engaged in public debates on the Shastras with established pandits, Dayananda wanted to overthrow the entire order of popular Hinduism in a single, ruthless throw. Dayananda challenged his opponents in many debates

1. Dayananda commemoration Volume, p.x iv.

on shastras (shastrarths) and he was always victorious in his interpretation of the true spirit of Vedas.

In 1870 Dayananda began the work of systematization of his religious beliefs and in 1874 he gave dictations of his most important of all the works, Satyarth Prakash (Light of Truth) written in Hindi, to obtain a wide circulation in Hindi-knowing public. In the introduction to this work Dayananda formulates his ideal of life: "My chief aim in writing this book is to unfold Truth, which consists in expounding truth as truth and error as error. Our aim has been to further the advancement and good of mankind, and to help men in the ascertainment of Truth whereby they could embrace the truth and reject falsehood, because there is certainly no other way of elevating the human race".¹

Dayananda was a widely travelled reformer who travelled all over India, except Madras, met the leaders of the other reform movements and discussed his views on religion, God and Culture. He met Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen of the Brahmo Samaj, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade of the Prarthana Samaj, Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society, Syed Ahmad Khan, the Muslim Modernist and many others and impressed

1. Dayananda: Introduction of the "Satyarth Prakash", quoted in the Dayanand Commemoration Volume, p.208.

all by his sound knowledge. Madame Blavatsky was "perfectly certain that India never saw a more learned Sanskrit scholar, a deeper metaphysician, a more wonderful orator and a more fearless denunciator of any evil, than Dayanand, since the time of Sankaracharya".¹

Dayananda died at Ajmer on October 30, 1883 at the age of fifty nine, in him passed away a master spirit, a devoted reformer to the cause of Aryan regeneration.

The educational thought propounded by Dayanand is based on his Vedic philosophy, therefore a brief survey of his philosophy will require a mention before we explain his educational thought.

Dayananda disapproved the idea that the world that we know by sense-perception is unreal. He proves this thesis with the help of some epistemological theories given in dialogue form, which look like Plato's dialogues. Dayananda argued that the objects exist independent of our perception of them and have a reality of their own. In order to prove that God created this world separate from Himself, Dayananda writes, "had He not created this world, how could He have been able to award souls their deserts, and how could they have reaped the fruits of their deeds -- good and evil -- done in the previous

1. Blavatsky, H.P.: The Caves and Jungles of Hindustan, reference quoted, Ibid. p. 335.

cycle of creation? If you were asked, what is the function of the eyes, you could only say, 'sight, of course'. In the same way, of what use could the knowledge, activity and power of creating the world be in God other than that of creating? Nothing else. The attributes of God, such as justice, mercy, the power of sustaining the world;¹ Dayananda held God to permeate the whole universe, having creating, sustaining and dissolving powers. To him God is an active and creative agency having no form but infinite energy. According to Dayanand though God created the universe, yet matter existed before the process of creation took place.

Dayananda believed in souls, which took on physical forms when they were born as human being. To Dayananda souls were not parts of God but had separate existence, governed by their good or bad deeds. "God can never become the soul, nor can the soul become God. They can never be one. They are always distinct from each other".² Man's soul is closely attached to his body. All psychic behaviour of the body is due to soul. "It is the soul that thinks, knows, remembers and feels its individuality through the organs of thought, discernment, memory and individuality. It is, therefore, the soul that enjoys or suffers.....it is

1. Dayanandai. "Satyarth Prakash", the English translation referred to here is by Chiranjiva Bhardwaja, 2nd Ed., Allahabad, 1915, p.250.

2. Ibid. p.278.

the soul thatdoes acts -- good or evil -- and consequently it is the soul alone that reaps the fruits thereof -- joy or sorrow. The soul is not a witness of acts. It is the actual doer that reaps the fruits of deeds alone.... The soul is not God and, consequently, it is not the seer of acts (but the actual doer)"¹. Dayananda held that responsibility for the actions, by claiming that human deeds were predetermined, could not be avoided.

Though Dayananda did not find relationship between soul and God, yet he accepted the doctrines of Transmigration and Karma, according to which soul may be reborn in bodies for indefinite number of times before achieving mukti. Luckily these were the only doctrines of traditional Hinduism, transmigration of soul and Karma, which were fully accepted and recommended by Dayananda. Though he opposed the current basis of caste but he held fast to the Vedic notion of the four Varnas or classes. He believed that according to the life led by a man his Varna could be changed.

Dayananda based all his philosophy on the four Vedas alone which to him were the paramount Religious Code, being the words of God. Except Vedas he was not prepared

1. Ibid. p.275.

to accept any other authority. If any other work agreed with the teachings of the Vedas, Dayananda also accepted it, but only as a secondary source.

Dayananda wanted to regenerate the society of his times, for achieving that aim he approached education of the people from a rational standpoint. His 'Satyarth Prakash' is a treatise on his educational philosophy, besides being an epitome of religion and social reform.

Dayananda was careful about education of the children since their very infancy upto the highest levels. He says "From the birth upto the age of five children should be instructed by the mothers, and from the sixth year to the eighth, by their father. In the beginning of the ninth year.....boys and girls should be sent only to those seminaries which are provided with best teaching staff of males and females".¹

Under the guidance of mother the children should learn Sanskrit alphabets and also those of foreign languages. Children should be encouraged to memorize such vedic poetical and prose pieces which may inculcate in them all desirable virtues. When the very young children begin to speak, the mother should contrive means so that the tongue of the child may acquire flexibility to pronounce distinctly.

1. Sen, N.B: "Wit and Wisdom of Swami Dayananda", p.52.

Dayananda recommends that from the age of plus five to eight years the father should take the responsibility of the instruction of the child. He writes "whom the children are able to express and grasp the words, they should be taught properly with the eldders, with those who are younger in age, with men of distinction, with father, mother, the king, and learned men, how to treat them and how to associate with them. All this should be done in order that there might be no occasion for ill behaviour and they might command due respect everywhere".¹ At this stage the children should be taught Devanagri and foreign scripts. They should commit to memory, with meanings; the Mantras (Vedic verses), Shlokas (couplets), Sutras (aphorisms), prose, poetry, bearing upon proper instruction. Whatever is unrighteous and superstitious should also form the subject of advice so that they might not fall prey to false beliefs e.g. ghosts and spirits.

Dayananda advised that after the age of eight years children should be sent to schools where teachers of good character, whether male or female, teach. Only such persons should be allowed to undertake the work of teaching who are thoroughly educated and virtuous. The teachers should so try as to make their pupils true in words, thoughts and deeds, cultured, self-controlled, mannerly,

1. Ibid. p.113.

physically and morally strong and well-versed in the vedas and other scriptures. Dayananda was very strongly against co-education. He advised to open separate schools for boys and girls after they attain the age of eight years. He recommended that "the place of study should be secluded and girls' and boys' schools should be two Kosas (about four miles) apart. The teachers, servants and menials should all be female in girls' schools and males in boys' schools".¹

Dayananda suggested to the students that "as long as they are Brahmacharis (male-students) and Brahmacharinis (female-students) they should keep themselves aloof from eight kinds of sensualities -- looking at the person of opposite sex, contactual relation, private meeting, conversation, love-story telling, intercourse, contemplation of a tempting object and company. The teachers should also keep them away from the above mentioned things so that they may increase their happiness by attaining sound education, training, refined manners, good habits and strength of body and the soul".²

Dayananda suggests that the seminaries (gurukulas) of the children must be at least about eight miles away from town and cities. There the students should live a

1. Ibid. p.53.

2. Ibid. p.44.

life of austerity. All children should be treated alike in matters of food, drink and clothes. The children should not be after the comforts of the body but should be free from the cares of the world so that they may devote themselves exclusively to their studies. During the student days the children should not be allowed to meet their parents so that they may not find any kind of distraction in their studies.

In the system of education of Dayananda the first thing the parents and teachers should teach to the children is the Gayatri Mantra.¹ After teaching this Mantra the children should be taught the different items of daily prayer such as bathing, sipping water (achman)² and breath exercise (pranayama)³. The pranayama should be taught to both the boys and the girls.

Dayananda recommended one system of education for all people. He gave equal status to man and woman, a Brahmin and an untouchable. Dayananda favoured a classless society where all the four varnas would receive education together.

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1. A hymn of the Yajur Veda, XXXVI, 3, an invocation to God.
2. This consists in taking up a little water in the palm of one's hand and applying it to the lips in order to relieve the irritation of the throat.
3. A very well organized process of deep breathing which burns off all impurities and exalts the soul.

It would be a matter of great interest to know that Dayananda had given five tests for the careful examination of the learning of the people. These were:-

- "1. What ever is in agreement with the qualities, functions or nature of God and conforms to the Vedas in truth. The reverse is untruth.
2. What tallies with the laws of nature is truth and what does not is untruth.....
3. Whatever is in consonance with the rules of conduct of the learned, truthful and fraudfree people is acceptable and the contrary is unacceptable.
4. Purity of the self should be attained through education.....
5. There are eight proofs of sources of knowledge:
(i) intuition (Pratyaksa), (ii) inference (Anumana),
(iii) Comparison (Upmana), (iv) Verbal knowledge (Shabda), (v) tradition (Aitihya), (vi) presumption (Arthapatti), (vii) probability (Sambhava) and negation (Abhava)."¹

Dayananda was confident that by means of these five tests, explained above, one can ascertain what is right and what is wrong. He advised the teachers to examine

1. Ibid. p.179.

everything on the criteria of these tests whatsoever they would like to teach to the students. The children should also follow these tests in accepting anything for them. If the students and teachers would not employ these tests in their education, the whole educational system would surely become a useless monotony where the students would become crammers and teachers tape-recorders of the books. So in examining any good thing in education these tests must be made use of.

Dayananda died in 1883 after doing reformation of the society hardly for eight years. But the ball set rolling by Dayananda caught momentum in the hands of his disciples -- Shardananda, Atmananda, Hans Raj, Lajpat Rai and many other savants -- who established Gurukulas, colleges, high schools, both for boys and girls all over India, in memory of Dayananda. These institutions followed the spirit of Dayananda where the institution of Brahmacharya was revived so as to live again the life lived by students in the ancient Indian Vedic times.

The popularity of the educational thought of Dayananda grew so much in the earlier decades of the 20th century and in the middle of the 20th century that a very large number of institutions were established where to a certain extent some of the ideals of education advocated by Dayananda had been put into practice. Heimsath, who had

visited a large number of such schools was "impressed by their approach to education, which can only be described as character-building, as well as by their academic qualifications. In 1947 the Samaj managed: 30 Gurukulas for boys; 10 Gurukulas for girls; 15 D.A.V. Colleges; 192 primary schools, 151 middle schools, and 200 high schools for boys; 700 primary schools and 10 high schools for girls; 142 night schools; and 322 schools for depressed classes".¹

The educational work done in Gurukulas and D.A.V. institutions shows the tremendous hold which the personality of Dayananda had on all who were associated with these institutions. Even without Dayananda's physical presence the educational reform movement smouldered for a long time, it shows the spell of his personality over his colleagues and followers working for the cause of education.

Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Vivekananda was a true prophet of the new Indian nationalism because his aim was to touch all Indians through love for them and spread afresh the religious message not yet known to them. The import of his whole life was to elevate the masses, his religion was not mysticism but a man-making religion and his God was not anything metaphysical but a true reality that is Man. Vivekananda writes

1. Upadhyaya, Ganga Prasad: "The Arya Samaj and the International Aryan League" (pamphlet), Delhi, 1947. pp. 13-14.

"Let all other vain gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere, His Hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything.....The first of all worship is the worship of those all around us.....These are all our gods -- men and animals; and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen".¹

Vivekananda's message to Indians to rebel against the evils of their society and establish a new life based on human exemplified the unique character of the social reform movement of his time. The outstanding impression that he made on his followers was not his adherence to a classical Hindu school of thought but his reinterpretation of ancient wisdom in order to meet actively the need of contemporary Indian life. Vivekananda was widely travelled person, the western example of a society embodying certain religious or spiritual ideals in its secular life stimulated his undertaking a practical and a radical reform in India. He demanded to "go down to the basis of the things, to the very roots. That is what I call radical reformation. Put the fire there (at the level of the masses) and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation."²

Vivekananda was not at all fussy about any particular

1. Vivekananda: Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p.130.

religion, though he was a Vedantist but his Vedanta was not limited to narrow boundaries. For the uplift of the masses Vivekananda was even ready to give up his religion. He writes "Leave to the next life the reading of the Vedanta, and the practice of meditation. Let this body which is here be put at the service of others.....The highest truth is this: God is present in all beings. They are His multiple forms. There is no other God to seek. He alone serves God who serves all other beings".¹ Vivekananda in his every breath preached and worked for the betterment of Indians.

Before we discuss Vivekananda's educational thought it would be interesting to know about the life and philosophy of this "warrior and conqueror"² as Romain Rolland called him.

Vivekananda, whose real name was Narendranath Datta, was born on January 12, 1863 in a wealthy Kayastha family in Calcutta. He studied in Duff college, where he was first interested in the rationalistic teachings of the Brahmo Samaj and afterwards was impressed by the writings of Spencer, Mill, Hume, and Darwin; but after a detailed study of these writers he found no peace, his soul craved for something high and sublime. Towards the end of

1r-Rolland Ibid-r-p-292.

1. Rolland, Romain: Prophets of the new India, quoted the speeches of Vivekananda on pp.251, 249-50.

2. Ibid. p.292

1881 he met Ramakrishana, a great yogi, at Dakshinesvar as an atheist unhappy in his atheism, but full of hatred for the myths and superstitions with which he identified the religion. By a close contact with Ramakrishana the mind of Narendra was gradually conformed and he became the most ardent disciple of Ramakrishana, under whose influence he became an adherent of the advaita, non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta, which directs man's attention to the essential oneness of all things and the desirability of release from sensed experience through mukti or moksha. Narendra learnt from his guru that all religions have truth, the highest truth is Man and to serve Man is to serve God.

Upon the death of Ramakrishana in 1886, Narendra founded the Ramakrishana Order, a fraternity of monks and lived with his brother monks for several years. In 1890 he set out on a long pilgrimage in India and in 1893 he went to America to attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. On the eve of departure he changed his name to Vivekananda. He toured America, England and Europe and spread the gospel of Ramakrishana and received material help for the Ramakrishana Mission in India and abroad. He addressed the meetings as a representative of Hinduism and attracted the attention of everyone by his magnificent presence, his gospel of the unity of all religions and his simple ethics of human service as the best worship of God.

During the three years which Vivekananda spent outside India he succeeded in gathering a large number of disciples and in founding Vedanta societies wherever he went.

After his return to India the effect of his Western experiences upon his thought became obvious. Before going abroad he held a feeling that his chief task was the regeneration but now after coming back he stressed the prime necessity of social and educational work.

In 1899 Vivekananda again visited America. The Vedanta Society of New York was now on a firm footing. Vivekananda founded many centres of the Vedanta society in California, Los Angeles and San Francisco. After lecturing in America, France and many countries of Europe he returned to India in December 1900. Due to no rest and strenuous work his health broke down. In India also rest was not ordained in his life and with over work he passed away on 4 July 1902 and in him India lost a great intellectual hero.

Vivekananda's hope for India's reformation rested on education for all, mostly secular, along with a massive spiritual rejuvenation. To him the panacea of all the social ills of Indian Society was found in the education of the masses. In a letter he wrote "Education, education, education alone. Through education, faith in one's own self, and through faith in one's own

self the inherent Brahman".¹ can wake up in the people. Vivekananda was not satisfied with the education given in the schools of his times.

In his letter cited above he further wrote "The education that our boys receive is very negative".² By negative education he meant that education which lacked in self knowledge, to him self knowledge was very essential because that knowledge only provided freedom from the bondage of worldly existence. Vivekananda understood that the education given in schools of his time provided only some means to get ordinary material prosperity for living an ordinary life like that of an animal. Education, according to Vivekananda, was required to provide "freedom, dispassion, renunciation" -- all these look very high ideals no doubt but show a way to very high ideals no doubt but show a way to get an education for fulness, not merely preparing for a life of an ordinary man but to live a life as a True religious man, a true artist or a true labourer, having a national character.

Comparing America's progress with India Vivekananda wrote: "I see it before my eyes a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the

1. Vivekananda: Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p.335.

2. Ibid. p.336.

masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e., by spreading education among the masses."¹ To achieve this desired aim Vivekananda organized central colleges where some meek and simple but faithful young people were trained. In working for the cause of education Vivekananda had no trust in the so-called rich people because to him they were "more dead than alive",² to work for the education of the people.

Vivekananda set in motion a machinery which was composed of some young workers who were trained to bring noble ideas to the doors of everybody especially to the poor. These missionaries were trained in a central college under the supervision of Vivekananda and his other brother monks. He did not recommend to force anything on others. He simply wanted that true knowledge of India as well as of other countries should be given to the masses.

Vivekananda gave his intention, when he wrote "We are to put the chemicals together, the crystalization will be done by nature according to her laws".³ Vivekananda was a sworn enemy of all established truths, he proposed that education

1. Ibid. p.335.

2. Ibid. p.65.

3. Ibid. p.78.

was a means to lay before the masses all the ideals known to the teacher, what masses liked best and which were most fitted to them might be taken and preserved by them.

In the education of children Vivekananda vigorously took up the cudgels against all dogmatic education, and nobody had more strenuously defended the freedom of the child. Vivekananda wished that the soul of the child should be free from all bonds. He writes "I can never teach you anything; you will have to teach yourself, but I can help you perhaps in giving expression to that thought... what right had my father to put all sorts of non sense into my head?.....or my master?You say they are good, but they may not be my way. Think of the appalling evil that is in the world today, of the million of millions of innocent children perverted by the wrong ways of teaching. How many beautiful spiritual truths have been nipped in the bud by this horrible idea of a family religion, a social religion, a national religion, and so forth. Think of what a mass of superstition is in your heads just now about your childhood's religion, or your country's religion, and what an amount of evil it does or can do".¹

Vivekananda's writings gave a very sound philosophical system of education. In that system a due place was

1. Rolland, Romain: "Prophets of the New India", Book Two 'The Life of Vivekananda', p.495.

given to the religion, character, child and the teacher. His system covered the scope for the education of the depressed classes, women, masses and all ranks and files of the whole society. Vivekananda established Maths (religious universities) both for men and women for giving full preparation for the progress of the world and the bettering its conditions.

Vivekananda had not written any treatise on education. His educational ideals are to be found scattered in his various speeches, letters and articles which are published in eight volumes under the title "complete works of Swami Vivekananda". He was a matchless educational and social reformer whose first duty, he thought, was towards his own people. "His universal soul was rooted in its human soil; and the smallest pang suffered by its inarticulate flesh sent a repercussion throughout the whole tree".¹

Romain Rolland, the great french author and biographer of Vivekananda writes about the great saint and reformer that "It may justly be said that India's destiny was changed by him, and that his teaching re-echoed throughout humanity".²

1. Ibid. p.570.

2. Ibid. p.571.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817 - 1898)

The most effective work in modernisation in Indian education was done by Syed Ahmad Khan, who stands out prominently as a dynamic force fighting against conservatism and ignorance. In the development of modern India his role was singular and praiseworthy. Syed Ahmad was an educationist, theologian, scholar, social reformer, politician and a journalist.

Syed Ahmad was born in 1817 in Delhi in a distinguished and respectable family. He learnt Quran from his mother and privately learnt Persian, Arabic, Mathematics, Astrology and tib. His formal education ended when he was 18 or 19 years old.

He joined service as Naib Munshi in 1839 and after passing the Munsif examination he was appointed as Munsif in 1841 and promoted as Sadr Amin in 1855, Sadr-us-Sudur in 1858, judge of the small cause court in 1867 and he willingly retired in July 1876 for doing educational work.

The Mutiny of 1857 put a very remarkable effect on Syed Ahmad. It gave a new dimension to his personality and awakened his potentialities to work for the Muslim Community who was reduced to a very bad plight after Mutiny. We shall restrict ourselves to see only the educational efforts of Syed Ahmad and make a mention of him as an educationist.

Syed Ahmad's first achievement in the educational field was the establishment of a Persian Madrasa in 1859. In 1863 he established the Scientific Society and prepared a scheme for the translation of English works into Urdu. In 1864 Syed Ahmad established a Madrasa at Ghasipur. He formed several committees to look after the working of this institution. Provisions were made in the Madrasa for instruction in five languages -- English, Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit.

In 1864, when Syed Ahmad was transferred to Aligarh, he got an opportunity to give a definite shape to his future educational and cultural plans. In 1867 he presented a memorandum to the Viceroy in which he asked for the arrangement for higher learning through Indian languages, examination in Indian languages and establishment of a faculty of Urdu in Calcutta university or a separate Urdu University.

In 1869 Syed Ahmad visited England where he had ample opportunity of studying at first hand the social and educational institutions of the English people and felt more and more convinced that it is only by the assimilation of Western thought and culture that the Muslims could hope to recover anything like their former position in India. After his return in 1870 Syed Ahmad made a more vigorous propaganda for the spread of English education

and Western culture among his people.

While in England, Syed Ahmad was convinced that it was education and only education which could serve as a panacea for all the social ills of the Muslims. When Vivekananda had gone abroad and had seen the advancement of the people of America, England and Europe, he was struck with the answer of his problem "why India was backward and poor?", and had found that the main cause of Indian ignorance was lack of education and Vivekananda had written to his brother-monks to launch a crusade for the education of masses. In the same way when Syed Ahmad saw the progress and advancement of the Britain in 1870, his national pride was deeply hurt and his mind began investigating the cause of his country's backwardness, he said in the same spirit as that of Vivekananda "Until the education of the masses is pushed on as it is here (in England) it is impossible for a nation to become civilized and honoured".¹ In elaborating his point further Syed Ahmad said "The cause of England's civilisation is that all the arts and sciences are in the language of the country. Those who are really bent upon improving and bettering India must remember that the only way of compassing this is by having the whole of arts and sciences translated into their own language. I should like

1. Nisami, K. A. : "Sayyid Ahmad Khan" letter of Syed Ahmad quoted on p.63.

to have this written in gigantic letters on the Himalayas, for the remembrance of future generations".¹

In England Syed Ahmad visited Oxford and Cambridge Universities and conceived the idea of establishing an educational institution for Muslims in India on the lines of those universities. The result was the school at Aligarh which Syed Ahmad founded in 1875, which was raised to the status of a college, the foundation stone of which was laid by Lord Lytton on January 8, 1877. This College provided for liberal education in arts and sciences through the medium of English language. It was a residential institution and helped a great deal in developing the mental outlook and personality of the young Muslim students on progressive lines.

Syed Ahmad wished, as he wrote in a letter to Salar Jung, to bring up the students in this college "to the same standard of learning as is attained by the students of the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the only distinction being that instead of the Christian, faith taught in the English universities, the Muhammadan faith would be taught here".²

In 1886, Syed Ahmad established the Muhammadan Educational Conference because he thought that a single College

1. Ibid. p. 63.

2. Ibid. p. 85. the letter quoted from 'Aligarh Documents', p. 172.

could not serve the educational needs of the entire Muslim population of India. He wanted to create necessary atmosphere for organising a movement for an extended educational activity. The objects of this conference were to promote Western education among the Muslims to make proper arrangements for religious instructions in the institutions of the Muslims, to encourage the education of Oriental subjects and theology, and to improve and raise the standard of old Indian maktabas.

The educational programme of Syed Ahmad was criticised by some Muslims who were more religious-minded than Syed Ahmad and looked askance at the modernisation of education and Europeanisation of the Muslim Society. The main reasons for this opposition were apparently not so much ideological as personal and were not weighty enough to appeal to the rank and file of the Muslim community.

When Annie Besant arrived in India in 1893 and travelled for her lecture tours, for the first time, she heard about the educational works of Dayananda, Vivekananda and Syed Ahmad Khan. Annie Besant was neither impressed by Dayananda's line of action and nor by Syed Ahmad's educational programme, one seemed to Annie Besant solely for the Hindu regeneration and the other entirely based on a programme for Muslim advancement. Annie Besant

wanted a viamedia between the two. For her design for adoption she desired such an example, of that precursor, which may suit to her Theosophical bent of mind. It was Vivekananda and his religious wideness which suited most to Annie Besant. Before coming to India Annie Besant had met Vivekananda in September 1893 in the Parliament of Religions, Chicago and had attended, also, his most of the public lectures there.

The two great religions, which have largely influenced the growth and development of the philosophy of Theosophy, are Hinduism and Buddhism. The whole terminology and theology of Theosophy has been derived from these two religions. The other religions have contributed very little, rather negligible, in the enrichment of Theosophy.

Vivekananda's religious broadness, due to his adhesion to advaita vedanta, was liked by Annie Besant, she tried to copy Vivekananda and appreciated when he said "We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called Man. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree? There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual, to know that I and my brother are one.... Let us work without desire for name or fame or rule over the others. Let us be free from the triple bonds of lust, greed of gain and anger. All the truth is with us".¹

1. Vivekananda: Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p.223, a letter to an Englishman.

Annie Besant also liked the work of Vivekananda for the masses of India, based on his humanistic philosophical ideologies. Annie Besant, in her educational pursuits, advocated a system of education which tallied mostly with the system of education of Vivekananda. Because of the similarity in the ideologies of Annie Besant and Vivekanand, she off and on invited Vivekananda to lecture¹ in the Theosophical Society so as to understand his view-points, on various issues of philosophy, religion and education, in a clear manner. In the central Hindu College Benares and other educational institutions established by Annie Besant in India the influence of Vivekananda's educational ideas was very clearly visible.

1. Vivekananda: Letters of Swami Vivekananda, in a letter written on 8th August, 1896 from Switzerland Vivekananda wrote "Mrs. Annie Besant invited me to speak at her Lodge, on Bhakti". p.299.

CHAPTER - III

PHILOSOPHICAL BASES OF ANNIE
BESANT'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY.

Annie Besant was primarily a philosopher. She had tried to develop her philosophical thought on the basis of her thorough study of different religions, both in England and in India. While in England, before her adhesion to Theosophy, when Annie Besant was hardly 26 years old, she was compelled to become a free-thinker atheist, because her discussions, concerning her religious doubts about Christianity, with Edward Pusey, Voysey, Charles Vaughan and Arthur Stanley -- the great custodians of Christianity in England in her times -- about the nature and existence of God, belief in Christ as God, evolution of a soul and other allied problems, could not give a satisfactory answer to her religious queries and thus it resulted in her denouncing Christianity.

After joining Theosophy in 1889, a vast field of philosophy was flung open before Annie Besant. Theosophy being so vast a subject, embracing the whole of human life at once, covering the fields of philosophy, science and religion; led Annie Besant into metaphysics. She found a

new approach to all the realities, which were hidden from her before.

Theosophy attracted Annie Besant because it gave most satisfactory answers to her doubts. The three objects of Theosophy, which encouraged Annie Besant, to join Theosophy were: To found a Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race or creed; to forward the study of Aryan literature and philosophy; to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the physical powers latent in man.¹ In Theosophy Annie Besant found a great possibility to know what was knowable and was unknown to her.

Theosophy was called "the science of comparative mythology" because it was based upon a number of facts that it was impossible to deny. The facts were gathered together one after another, from different cultures, ancient beliefs, religious books of the past and the teachings of the great seers and saints. To Annie Besant, Theosophy was the backbone of every great religion. She writes "On matters of religious opinions the members (of Theosophical Society) are absolutely free. The founders of the society deny a personal God, and a somewhat subtle form of Pantheism is taught as the Theosophic view of the universe though even this is not forced on the members of the Society. I have no desire to hide the fact that this form of Pantheism

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.452.

appears to me to promise solution of some problems.....
which Atheism leaves untouched".¹

After coming to India as a Theosophist Annie Besant studied, in details, all the chief seven religions of India -- Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism and Sikhism -- and thus the traditional sealed secrets of religious beliefs and truths were thrown open to her knowledge and had overpowered her philosophical thought. Annie Besant had a reverence for all religions. She wanted to found the fundamental unity of all religions and her policy of work was "instead of bending our efforts to convert our neighbours to our own faith, we should do well to search out and bring forth the spiritual treasures it contains, often hidden under a mass of intellectual verbiage that repels the non-institutional. A true brotherhood of religions can only be secured by members of each recognizing and honouring the truths contained in other faiths, and being willing to live in amity"² with each other.

Annie Besant delivered, on the twenty-first anniversary of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in December 1896, four lectures on four great religions -- Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity. On the twenty sixth anniversary of the Theosophical Society in 1901, she deli-

1. Ibid. pp.452-53.

2. Annie Besant: 'Four Great religions', quoted in the Preface to American edition of the book, p.1.

vered four lectures on religions -- Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and Theosophy. By these lectures Annie Besant aimed at making a religious unity in India, she writes "If it may be that here one nation shall be builded of many faiths; if the Musalman can love the Hindu and the Hindu love the Musalman; if the Christian can clasp hands with the Parsi and the Parsi with the Christian; if the Jaina and the Buddhist and the Sikh can love each other as brethren and not hate each other as rivals; then shall be the triumph of religion, and then alone shall the name of God become a name of peace".¹

A detailed study of comparative religions in the light of Theosophy helped Annie Besant in developing a solid philosophical system. She writes "I believe in an Inner Government of our own world, the Occult Hierarchy, composed of the company of Just Men made perfect, the Rishis of the Hindus and Buddhists, the Saints of the Christians, the great Prophets of the Hebrews and Muslims, who are within the reach of men, who, assisted by a great host of Devas, Archangels, Angels and Nature spirits, guide and help upward sub-human and human evolution from the simple to the complex, from nescience to knowledge, from imperfection to relative perfection, within the inviolable laws of Nature,

1. Annie Besant: 'The Religious Problem in India', quoted in the first lecture on 'Islam', p.2.

which express the conditions of the manifestation of the Universal Life through the Great Architect of our universe!"¹ Annie Besant gained this religious faith after a copious study of all the basic religions of the world. Her philosophical attitudes were not of unquestioning acceptance but she tested, even a slightest philosophical idea, which crept up in her mind, on the touchstone of her genuine reasoning. Thus Annie Besant's philosophical bases had compelled her to participate in some practical side, especially in education.

In order to understand the philosophical bases of Annie Besant's educational thought, it would be useful to study her philosophy under the following heads:-

1. Annie Besant's faith in the Hindu Metaphysical concepts, and in the
2. Ethical concepts.

1. Faith in the Hindu Metaphysical Concepts:

Though Annie Besant had a great reverence for all the religions but she was drawn more devotedly towards Hinduism, it would be of great interest to note that Annie Besant had adopted Hinduism. Annie Besant had a

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1. In 1926, Annie Besant published a book on India under the title "India: Bond or Free". The original manuscript had a foreward which was omitted when the book finally appeared. That foreward states very briefly the "Faith" of Annie Besant, quoted in the 'Theosophist' of October 1947 being Besant Centenary Issue, Vol.69, No.1., p.21.

firm faith in Hindu Metaphysics. To her, Theosophy had a great lesson for Hinduism, as she writes "As Theosophy spreads, Hinduism revives, because it receives a current of the divine Ancient Wisdom which vivifies its forms and makes its reality felt".¹

Before her arrival in India, she had learnt Sanskrit and had become a well-versed Sanskrit scholar. Her thorough study of cardinal religious books of Hinduism intensified her self-introspection. When she came to India in 1893 her religious introspection deepened. She discussed her religious queries about Hinduism with Hindu scholars and Sanskritists like Bhawan Dass and Gangadhara Shastri. From now on Annie Besant undertook a deep study of Bhagavad-Gita and it became a constant companion of her life. She translated Gita from original Sanskrit into English, wrote hints on its study and also studied the original books on Hindu religion. Annie Besant lectured incessantly before vast audience on the Gita, on the Upanishads, on the hidden wisdom of the Puranas, the Bhagavata, the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Writing about Annie Besant's love for Hindu thought and culture, Muthulakshmi says "Dr. Annie Besant was the prime factor who influenced men and women of other lands

1. Annie Besant: "Theosophy in relation to Human life", p.21.

in favour of Hindu thought and culture at a time when India's own sons and daughters were becoming strangers to their own religion and culture".¹

Thus Annie Besant's thorough understanding of Hindu religion and culture enabled her to construct a system of Hindu philosophy which she applied in solving the educational and social problems of the Indian society. 10 Annie Besant a true philosophy was "an answer satisfactory to the reason to all the great problems of life.....To see the One under endless forms, to realise the unity amid infinite diversity, and so to satisfy the reason"² were the chief functions of philosophy.

Here we shall try to analyse her philosophy in order to see how Annie Besant, through her facile pen and magnetic eloquence, managed to explain and interpret some Hindu metaphysical concepts.

(A) The Self:

Annie Besant used the word 'the Self' for "all-pervading, all-irradiating, all-vivifying, all-sustaining Life of God.....All that there was of love and of beauty were but the scattered reflections of the one Self".³ To her Self is Brahman who plans the world, with all its beauty,

1. Reddi, Muthulakshmi: "The Religious and Social Reformer", The Annie Besant Centenary Book, p.59.

2. Annie Besant: 'Mysticism', p.43.

its happiness and sufferings, its joys and pains, in order that His powers may be shown forth in manifestation. Annie Besant says "from the fire-mist to the LOGOS, all exist for the sake of Self".¹ This quotation clarifies the meaning of the Self, according to Annie Besant, as in her views all the existence in the world is the fragment of the One Self embodied in countless forms, realizing their own identity and manifesting the powers of the Self through the garment of matter around them.

Considering the Self, Annie Besant receives enough support from the quotation from the Bhagavad Gita where Shri Krishana says "Mamam'sh -- My portion -- "a portion of My Self" are all these living objects, these Jivatmas".²

To Annie Besant "The Self of the Universe and the Self of man are one, and in knowing the Self we know That which is at the root of the universe and of man alike".³ She considers that One Self is in every separated body.

To her, every thing is dear, for the sake of Self "not for the outer shape but for the inner Self -- the lowest as well as the highest, the speck of dirt as well as the loftiest Deva".⁴ She considers the Self as the synonym of Brahman, which is in all, pervades all. "It is the Self

1. Annie Besant: 'Dharma', p.25.

2. Annie Besant: 'Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad Gita', p.5.

3. Annie Besant: 'The Self and Its Sheaths', p.5.

4. Annie Besant: Ibid.p.13.

of all, and exists in all, and is all".¹

In Annie Besant's system of philosophy the Self of man is that what sometimes we call Atma and we also come across the Self of all, which is Parmatma a higher Self. Though these selves seem separate but are all fragments of the One Self, and therefore destined to perfection. In Gita Shri Krishana says "I established this universe with a fragment of myself and I remain"² a fragment of that Supreme is the Self, the real Self of a man.

As the Self is One, the variety seen in the world is of the outer universe which is the play of illusions or the veil of Maya. This outer appearance binds us to the Unity which is the only life, the only Lord of the Universe, beyond whom there is nothing; and He is One.

To Annie Besant the Self is actionless. Activity is of Prakrti, the veil with which the Self surrounds Himself, the play of gunas. Annie Besant writes "The variety and activity in Nature are the outer semblances, the visible appearances, of that maturity and death, the wheel of constant change in living objects, these are the play of the gunas, and the gunas revolve, whilst the Self remains unchanged.The forms are changing and therefore illusory; the life is Himself and He is all".³ In Bhagavad Gita

1. Ibid. p.14.

2. The Bhagavad Gita, X,42.

3. Annie Besant: 'The Three Path to Union with God', p.36.

Lord Krishana says "He who seeth that matter verily performeth all actions, and that the Self is actionless, he seeth".¹ Annie Besant is firm in her belief that the Self is actionness. His apparent movements belong to external Nature. The Self is everywhere seated in all and beyond all.

Three-fold aspects of the Self:

The Self in man, being in the image of God, in triple as the Self, the Divine, is triple. Annie Besant elaborates this point with the help of the Hindu philosophy where Brahman is three fold, who is Sat-Chit-Ananda or Kirya-Jnanam-Ichchha. The human reflection of that triple Divine Self is the triple Self in man. Three-fold aspects are explained under:-

(i) The first aspect brought into activity for the building of the universe is Sat, life, existence, Kirya activity, the active creative power. In man this power awakens intelligence and becomes active. This activity is the reflection of Brahma, which is known as the Universal Mind, in Hindu philosophy, which is the creative energy from which all are born, brings forth imaginative power in man.

(ii) The second aspect is Chit or Jnanam, which is

1. Bhagavad-Gita. XIII.28.

later evolved in man. This aspect helps in the recognition of unity rather than diversity. The effect of Chit playing upon Sat in man is the intelligence that separates, divides and analyses the multiple forms and their inter-relations. Chit is the wisdom that realises the unity of all things and that accomplishes union.

(iii) Third and highest aspect of the Self is Will, Ichchha, or Ananda, the first Bliss, the unity that lies beyond union, and this can be developed in man only because man is one with the Eternal in his nature.

Sheaths of the Self:

Annie Besant explains five sheaths of the Self in her system of philosophy. These are:

(1) Sheath of food-body; the annamayakosha: This sheath is the sheath of food-body. But the body that I use and I wear "is not me". The body that I use has certain purposes and it is 'I' who use it. Annie Besant explains double activity in this sheath of ours that we call our body. Firstly it has the activity of the atoms and the molecules and the cells of the body. "It is not Atma's activity in the sheaths as the Self of the sheath, but Atma's activity in the constituent particles as the Self of the particles which is necessary for their existence".¹

1. Annie Besant: The Self and Its Sheaths, p.37.

Secondly, there is an 'I' as well as a sheath, and the 'I' uses this sheath for its own purpose. Annie Besant, while elaborating this point says "'I' in me wants to write.....My hand holds the pen and dips it into the ink and traces it on the paper. When this sheath of mine was very young and was training for my use, it was taught to write, and one part of the sheath learned to take the pen in a particular way, to hold it in a particular way; and always when 'I' wanted to write it was to do this duty, without which the minds, the 'I' could not write on the material plane.....note this: that when it has once learned it, it continued to do it in the same way, and if I want to change the way of writing.....I have got to take a lot of trouble to change the automatic activity of the cells of the sheath".¹

The food-body sheath supplies the nervous centres on which the second sheath, the sheath of prana acts directly as the co-ordinating and controlling energy which fashions it for the purposes which the higher intelligence demands.

(11) The Sheath of Prana, the pranamayakosha:

The prana is the outgoing energy of Atma which is the life. Shankara tells us that this prana is Kriyashakti, the energy of doing, so the sheath of prana is the sheath

1. Ibid. p.40.

of activity. This subtle sheath in which Atma as prana is working, and it controls and holds together the whole of the lower matter as sheath. There could be no sheath of food, no physical body, if it were not for prana, which co-ordinates all the separate cells and makes them into one orderly whole. It is interesting to note that prana is only Atma in activity, Atma in itself cannot work. Atma is Sat, immovable, unchangeable. The outgoing energy is prana and from Atma prana is born".¹

(iii) The Sheath of Collections, the manomayakosha:

The material which go to build the manomayakosha in man has been evolved in the animal Kingdom, and these materials carry on the results of their evolution, and are therefore available for the building of man.

The response to pleasure and pain evolved in the animals is carried to the man. In order that man might be builded, it becomes necessary that the materials of the sheath should be ready to be co-ordinated together. The manomayakosha plays double actions, it is in truth the organ of thinking, but is also pervaded by the senses; that is, this double action going on in it always, the receipt from without and the elaboration from within. This

1. Prashnopanishat, 111,3.

This is why this sheath is so difficult to understand.
This is why knowledge is necessary if the Self would become free and know Itself as Itself alone.

(iv) The Sheath of discrimination, the vignanamayakosha:

The vignanamoyakosha is the sheath of the Self by which the lower sheaths are to be mastered. Into this sheath experiences are reflected from the manomayakosha as ideal concepts. Manomayakosha is the collector and elaborator, the vignanamayakosha is to arrange and discriminate, to have the whole of this elaborated collection as the material to work on, the whole of this as material by which it is going to gain higher consciousness and a more perfect cognition of the individual Self. The special work in this sheath is the work of abstract reasoning, dealing with pure ideas, separated from the concrete presentations.

(v) The Sheath of Bliss, the anandamayakosha:

In Mundakopanishat is written "He, all-wise, all-knowing glorious in the world, in the divine town of Brahman, placed in the ether, standeth Atma, of the nature of mind, ruler of Prana, of the body, of food. Concentrated in the heart, by the knowledge of That, the wise behold the Radiant, whose body is bliss, immortal".¹ The anandamayakosha is

1. Mundakoponishat, 11,II,p.7.

there, where the Atma knows Itself and its nature is bliss. Writing about the anandamayakosha, Annie Besant says, "It is Brahman. It is the Logos of the Soul. It is the Atma conscious of itself".¹

The Working of the Sheaths:

The sheaths of the Self solve so many of the problems, which puzzle us everyday. Firstly, these sheaths present to us a number of illusory 'I's' apparently conscious entities, and when we look inward, we find a psychological struggle and a mental confusion going on, as though we consisted of many 'I's' instead of one. With the help of self-consciousness we can understand we can understand the causes of the real mental conflicts. Explaining the working of the sheaths philosophically in solving the mental conflicts Annie Besant says "For instance looking from without, I see the body which is at work, and then I trace the activity of prana, and then I see the passions carrying a man away, and then see the mind interfering and pulling him back again, studying like that from without I see all these different things warring the one against the other.....when they all are subordinated to the One Life and when everything comes from within. There is the end of strife".²

1. Annie Besant: The Self and Its Sheaths, p.83.

2. Ibid. pp.86-91.

Secondly, the sheaths of the desire and the emotions which clothes the self can be conquered by the mind only. Training in meditation is the right path to over-power the desire and emotions. Annie Besant writes, "Turn the mind to meditation.....listen to the voice of the mind, and use the mind to control the senses and to turn them to the really desirable, to that which is lasting instead of fleeting.....when the senses are silenced... then hand over the mind to the intellect, the lower to the higher man when once you have seen and realized the Self, then the desires and the mind will be silent".¹

Thirdly, the sheaths play a very important role as they help us to learn sympathy. Annie Besant writes "sympathy is only perfect when pain is felt in the sheath, vibrating to every throb of agony from the outside world, but when the Self knows Itself as separate from the sheath and realises the pain, feels it in the sheath, but is not disturbed in Itself by the vibration that is agonising the sheath in which It is clothed".² Annie Besant thinks it possible to feel pain with the uttermost anguish. It is also possible that the manomayakosha shall be full of pain and every fibre strained to almost the breaking point, and yet that the Self within, knowing the pain and

1. Annie Besant: Theosophy and the Theosophical Society, pp.20-26.

2. Annie Besant: The Self and Its Sheaths, p.97.

feeling it by reflection is yet absolutely still, calm and unshaken. No pain touches It, though the pain is felt in the sheath, and It can act with perfect steadiness and absolutely at human service. There is the triumph in man.

The Realization of the Self:

Annie Besant gives two ways towards the attainment of the Universal Self. The first is the way of the intellect, which deals with the metaphysics, which gradually lifts a man out of superstition, out of narrowness and out of ignorance, and carries him as far as human intellect can go.

The second path of the realization of the Self is the path of the conquered senses and mind when, in the words of Annie Besant "the quietude of the senses and the tranquility of the mind the man beholds the glory of the Self".¹ Annie Besant believed that by the intellect we can reach the highest philosophy but it is only through the conquest of lower nature that we can breathe the same air in which the higher Self lives. The intellect and even devotion cannot help in the Self realization. It is only by sinking into the depths of our own being, by searching within, the supreme Self can be realized, and

1. Annie Besant: 'Theosophy and Life's Deeper Problems', p.7.

there only shall we realize that we are One with the Self Universal.

(B) G O D

Annie Besant believes that "there is no religion higher than Truth". To her God or Truth are the same. She is quite conscious of the unnumberable definitions of God because His manifestations are innumerable. "That which is behind all forms of life is Himself the Life, the consciousness, the Power. All forms are but an expression of part of His existence, and beyond and above all forms He Himself, in his infinite being, remains".¹

Consistently with Hinduism Annie Besant does not mind calling her religion pantheistic as in it "everything embodies the life of God, there is nothing existing that does not share in His Beauty, in His strength, and in His life"² she does not believe in any personal God, to her God is an all-embracing spirit. God or truth, Annie Besant considers, is not only in us but also out of us.

Annie Besant never considers that God, Universe and Man are isolated from each other. Her philosophy presents an integrated picture of God, Universe and Man. She writes, "Our Self is one, not multiple, albeit His overflowing life expresses itself in multitudinous ways".³

1. Annie Besant: "Mysticism", in her lecture 'God Idea' she states the quotation as stated, p.42.

2. Ibid. p.44.

3. Annie Besant: "Theosophy", p.19.

For understanding Annie Besant's views on God, we shall study God under following heads:-

1. Proofs for the existence of God
2. Nature of God
3. Quality in relation to God
4. The Manifestation of God

1. Proofs for the existence of God: In the philosophy of Annie Besant, God is regarded as one reality, one life, which is the all enveloping power, outside which nothing can exist. In her beautiful artistic style Annie Besant says about God, "He is self-existent, Infinite and External the One life on which all lives depend, the One Existence from which all Existences are drawn; "My name is He who hath shaped everything". Everything that exists is in Him; "In Him we live and move and have our being". He has been compared to an ocean, whose billows are universes, whose spray is myriad forms; to a Fire, whence millions of sparks proceed, and every spark a spirit; to a Tree, bearing innumerable leaves, and every leaf a life. He is vaster than space, and in him move the uncounted myriads of stars, each one the centre of a system. He is minuter than an atom, for He is within every atom as its indwelling life. There is nothing so huge that it can overstretch Him, there is nothing so mer-celour tiny that it can escape Him. "He hath no form nor colour, nor outline",

but all forms draw their beauty from Him, all colours are portions of His white light, all outlines are expressions of His thought".¹

Annie Besant does not give any of the traditional proofs for God's existence. She regards personal experience to be the only proof as far as God is concerned. In her book 'An Introduction to Yoga', Annie Besant says "you cannot demonstrate God by any arguments or reasoning; He is above and beyond reasoning, and although the reason may guide you on the way, it will not prove to demonstrate that God is. The only way you can know Him is by diving into yourself. There you will find Him, and know that He is without as well as within you".²

But the idea of God can be made more concrete if we point out some considerations which make His existence undeniable. Davidson writes, "The three old-fashioned theistic proofs (ontological, cosmological and theological) have their use, but it is not that of a logical proof of Divine existence. They are all attempts, each in its own way, to fill in with content the conception of God whose existence is already presupposed".³

Annie Besant approves of Davidson's view point. She recognizes God everywhere. She finds Him "in the

1. Annie Besant: "Universal Text-Book of Religions", p.27.

2. Annie Besant: 'An Introduction to Yoga', pp.39-40.

3. Davidson: "Recent Theistic Discussions", p.30.

stability of mountains, in the crashing billows, in the rush of whirling winds.....in the star-strewn depths of space, in the wide stretchings of desertsin the colours of flower-spangled meadows, in the rippling laughter of brooklets, in the green depths of forest shades, in the gleaming expanse of snowy mountain peaks, in the waving of the golden corn, in the sunshine, in the silver of wavelets in the moonlight".¹

Annie Besant has a firm belief that "there is no definite proof of God save the witness of the Self within to His existence, and his idea of finding the proof of God is that you should strip away from your consciousness all limitations, and thus reach the stage where you have pure consciousness -- save a veil of the thin nirvanic matter. Then you know that God is".²

At some places Annie Besant tries to prove the existence of God by the use of the old argument from "design" She writes "He is the Shaper, Builder, Architect of His worlds, and His life alone gives birth to them, preserves them during their term of existence and recalls them out of their separation into His Unity when that term is over".³

To Annie Besant, God manifests Himself for three divine functions:-

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1. Annie Besant: 'Theosophy', p.68.
 2. Annie Besant: "An Introduction to Yoga", p.39.
 3. Annie Besant: "The Universal Text Book" (Part I)" p.33.

(i) The Creation of the Universe: His work is of bringing a Universe into being, of gifting it with a share in His Existence, of vesting in it a portion of His Existence.

(ii) The Preservation of the Universe: He alone sustains and preserves the worlds, and

(iii) The Destruction of the Universe: When the period of rest arrives, He alone dissolves the world.

To Annie Besant, God "takes the designation of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, accordingly as He creates, preserves and destroys.....He is the Father of our Spirits, the Protector of our lives, the Source of our activities".¹

It must be remembered that Annie Besant does not attach much importance to any proofs of the God's existence. What really she feels important is the nature of God and his relation to the universe and man.

Nature of God

Annie Besant did not believe in the Personality of God in her early years, even before joining Charles Bradlaugh in his free-thought pursuits, she had given up the use of prayer, Annie Besant writes, "not because I was an Atheist but because I was still a Theist: It seemed to me to be

1. Ibid. pp.34-35.

absured to pray, if I believed in a God who was wiser and better than myself. An all-wise God did not need my suggestions: an all-good God would do all that was best without any prompting. Prayer appeared to me to be a blasphemous impertinence and for a considerable time I had discontinued its use. But God fades gradually out of the daily life of those who never pray; an God who is not a Providence is a superfluity; when from the heaven does not smile a listening Father, it soon becomes an empty space whence resounds no echo of man's cry".¹

After joining the Theosophical Society Annie Besant followed the foot-steps of both colonel Olcott and H.P. Blavatsky and accepted the personality of God. Her inclinations were philosophical and religious for which the acceptance of personality is necessary. She believed that Ishvara of Sankara was of Mayic series and is unable to satisfy the religious and philosophical hunger of mankind. Like a Vaishanava Vedantist Annie Besant accepts a God who is "all-inclusive". Moreover she believes in the possibility of personal relation between God and man. "The presence of evil and pain in the world made by a good God" does not favour the opinion of Annie Besant about God,

1. Annie Besant: 'The Autobiographical Sketches', p.87.

to be considered useful for the religious of the world. That is the reason that Annie Besant does not approve of the God who brings sufferings and difficulties. She writes "I hated the God who required the death sacrificed at his hands".¹

The concept of Personality of God is very recent idea and we shall see later, how Annie Besant develops her idea of personality, while explaining her ethical and aesthetic outlook. Here it is quite sufficient to say that Annie Besant's personality of God was a clear advance from Buddhistic rationalism and ethicism of the imaginative Hinduism of the Upanishads and Puranas. Indeed Annie Besant tries to go still further. She even more or less openly allies herself to the so-called idolatory of popular Hinduism. She does not condemn idolatory but emphasizes the teachings of the Upanishads. She is known as a defender of Puranic Hinduism. Annie Besant quotes many passages from the Upanishads to show that they do not exclude the idea of a personal God.

It is significant that we rarely find the word "Absolute" in the writings of Annie Besant. She often speaks of God as "Self", "Brahman", "Spirit", etc., she attributes personality to God, not for bringing him down

1. Ibid. p.52.

to the stature of man but of proclaiming him to be the root of the highest and best that mankind strives for but never attains. Annie Besant's God is infinite and His Personality does not limit Him in any way. She writes "He is greater than all universes".¹

Quality in Relation to Brahman:

Here we shall consider the attitudes of Annie Besant towards the question of the applicability of Quality to the Brahman. In the Indian philosophy the controversy about Saguna (possessed of qualities) Brahman and Nirguna (devoid of qualities) Brahman is very typical. Strictly speaking there is no transition from Nirguna Brahman to Saguna Brahman. Nirguna Brahman is unchangeable. It does not undergo the least change and cannot get transformed into Brahman with attributes.

But in the system of Annie Besant "The embodied Self of the Nirguna Brahman is the Saguna Brahman" and both these qualities have a close affinity with each other. She quotes Upanishads and says, "From non-existence came forth existence".² For her the single syllable, the Pranava means the Nirguna Brahman. But the same syllable spoken as a triplicity means the Saguna Brahman. She writes where the one is without attributes,

1. Annie Besant: "Universal Text Book", p.

2. Annie Besant: "The Wisdom of the Upanishads", p.24.

the triple is spoken of as Sat, Chit, Ananda, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. The First Being is the Saguna Brahman....the One syllable, the Nirguna; the same word with a difference, three syllables, the Saguna; and that may guide you to some little glimpse of the mystery before us: how the One becomes the Three, the same and yet, by the presence of the manifested qualities, different".¹

Annie Besant suggests that the One Reality, "the partless Aum, the One syllable is the partless Brahman, the Nirguna Brahman" and "the letters taken separately, the A, the U, the M are no longer one syllable, but three.... there are the three stages of consciousness".², the Saguna Brahman.

There are many meanings for these three letters -- the A, the U and the M -- for wherever a trinity is found these letters may symbolise its parts. Annie Besant explains these letters according to the Upanishads. She says that "these three letters may be taken as symbolising Ishvara Himself, His Maya and His relation to His work".³

Annie Besant's these letters, as three types of consciousness, can be explained as follows:-

(1) "A", Vaishvanara, the waking consciousness, which is also called Vital Self or Vital Soul or Pranatma. It

1. Ibid. p.25.

2. Ibid. p.12.

3. Ibid. p.12.

is known as Personal Self that which exists whenever there is consciousness embodied in physical matter.

(ii) "U", Taijasa, the super-waking consciousness. It is called "the dream-consciousness" in the western psychology. But the 'Svapna' of the Eastern Psychology is not the equivalent of the dream-consciousness. There is no one English word which expresses its meaning. By 'Svapna' Annie Besant means a state higher and more real than the waking consciousness. To Annie Besant 'Svapna' is higher and more real state than the waking state as it exists in all subtle worlds -- in the individual Self, the Jivatma, the Monad.

(iii) "M", the God World, which is revealed in its utmost splendour in the highest world of all, where Ishvara Himself unfolds His powers, that is the Prajna; He is all-knowing, perfect in knowledge, Ishvara, the Ruler, the Director, the all-sustainer, the Supreme, the Pratygatma, the Avtaratma of all, the Saguna Brahman.

To Annie Besant the word AUM represents in its three letters everything which exists. In these letters we find, in the words of Annie Besant, "the three-fold Brahman as manifest, the One as unmanifest; when pronounced as a triplicity, it means the three-fold manifested Brahman (the Saguna Brahman) and when pronounced as a unit it means the Nirguna Brahman".¹

1. Ibid. p.15.

The Manifestations of God:

In the philosophical system of Annie Besant God's many manifestations have been explained, she thinks of Him as "the thousand-handed God",¹ who is making the world better, more righteous, more loving and more beautiful every moment. She considers God to be the origin of all manifestations. Her theosophical outlook regards God as Creator and the universe as a creation in time and space. She has a faith in the exoteric depths of a religion where God is regarded as separate from His creation, as a workman is separate from the object He makes, and has a belief in the extra-Kosmic God of esoteric religion where God has no separation from His work, concerning this view of creation and relationship of God to His manifestations we shall explain Annie Besant's views to the following manifestations of God:-

- (i) The Manifestation of God in Nature
- (ii) The Manifestation of God in the Unseen.
- (iii) The Manifestation of God in Man.

(i) The Manifestation of God in Nature: Annie Besant explains the manifestations of God in Nature. In her book 'The Ancient Wisdom', she writes: coming forth from the depths of One Existence, from the One beyond all thought

1. Annie Besant: "The Three World Movements", p. 30.

and all speech, a LOGOS, by imposing on Himself a limit, circumscribing voluntarily the range of His own Being, becomes the manifested God, and tracing the limiting sphere of His activity thus outlines the area of His universe within that sphere the universe is born, is evolved and dies; it lives, it moves, it has its being in Him; its matter is His emanation; its forces and energies are currents of His life; He is immanent in every atom, all-pervading, all-sustaining, all-evolving. He is its source and its end, its cause and its object; its centre and circumference; it is built on Him as its sure foundation, it breathes in Him as its encircling space, He is in everything and everything in Him."¹

Annie Besant's God is immanent. In her book 'The Immediate Future', Annie Besant writes: "It is that in everything that lives, in a universe where all is living; there the universal Life that is God is present, supporting and maintaining.....and there is nothing in the whole of the mighty universe, imaging in its great immensity all that infinity of which it is an image, however imperfect; in all the systems of worlds, in suns unnumbered, in space that knows no ending, in lives that know no numbering, nothing from the very lowest grain of dust to the very LOGOS

1. Annie Besant: 'The Ancient Wisdom', p.45.

of a system that can exist bereft of the Life which is the root, the support of all".¹

Annie Besant is definite "to realise the presence of God behind the material phenomenon", She writes, "Not a fire that burns upon earth, whether the fire of the Volcanic mountain, whether the fire ranging through the vast forest.....that is.....the presence of the God".²

(11) The Manifestation of God in the Unseen: To Annie Besant the divine life has immense variety of forms and all these forms are not confined only to this world. She considers this world to be a mere speck of illimitable space. She thinks it "unreasonable to suppose that the divine life manifests only in the physical matter on our one small world".³ She is confident that there are countless inhabited worlds and the huge realms of space are composed of matter too subtle for our vision, are all-thronged with beings sharing in the inexhaustible Life of God.

Annie Besant writes, "All religions have recognized the existence of superhuman Intelligence, and have called them by various names. The Hindu and the Buddhist speak of them as Devas, Shining Ones; the Hebrew, the Christian and the Musalman name them Archangels and Angels, the Zoroastrian calls them the seven Ameshaspentas (Archangels)

1. Annie Besant: 'The Immediate Future', pp.29-30.

2. Annie Besant: "Evolution of Life and Form", pp.58-59.

3. Annie Besant: 'The Universal Text Book'(Part I)'p.49.

with their hosts of subordinate ministers, including the Parohars. Most of the religions also recognise the existence of inferior Intelligences.....many sensitive persons feel the presence of conscious life in scenes of natural beauty, and many are able to see these lesser children of nature sporting in the woods, the streams, the air; they are called nature spirits, elementals, fairies, genii, jinns, etc".¹

In her book 'Esoteric Christianity' Annie Besant explains this thesis more elaborately when she says, "stretching between the Trinity and humanity are many grades and hierarchies of invisible beings;.....they are found in all regions, and they ensoul the energies of Nature. From the standpoint of Occultism there is no dead force and no dead matter. Force and matter alike are living and active, and an energy or a group of energies is the veil of an Intelligence, of a consciousness, who has that energy as his outer expression, and the matter in which that energy moves yields a form which he guides or ensouls....Without these angelic Lives, these countless invisible Intelligence, these consciousness which ensoul the force and matter which is Nature, Nature herself would not only remain unintelligible, but she

1. Annie Besant: Ibid. pp.50-51.

would be out of relation alike to the Divine Life that moves within and around her, and to the human lives that are developing in her midst. These innumerable Angels link the worlds together".¹

(iii) The Manifestation of God in Man: Annie Besant finds God in man as 'the crown of creation'. She believes that "the final image of the Supreme on earth is man; in man alone is the highest life; the others are climbing towards it, but in them it has not yet evolved".² Annie Besant is confident that God dwells within all and there is only One Self within which we all are rooted. She writes, "The recognition of the One Self dwelling equally in all is the one sure foundation of Brotherhood.....To live it even to even to a small extent, cleanses the heart and purifies the vision; to live it perfectly would be to eradicate all stain of separateness and to let the pure shining of the self irradiate us, as light through flawless glass".³

Annie Besant further writes, "Every one of us, if we only think of it, each one is at work to carve his own life into a perfect image, the image of the Divine manifest in man. It is not that the Divine is not within you; were

1. Annie Besant: "Evolution-of Esoteric Christianity", pp.285-

2. Annie Besant: "Evolution of Life and Form", p.38.

3. Annie Besant: "The Ancient Wisdom", pp.189-91.

it not so, how should you bring it forth? The ideal comes before the manifestation, the thought creates the form, and in every one of you there is sleeping, as it were, the Divine image, and your work is to make that image manifest, and then you are the spiritual man.....wherever you may be, in whatever workshop of this great world you may find yourself at labour, keep ever in your heart the ideal that you fain would realize. Feel the presence of the imprisoned Divinity that you have the mighty privilege, and you alone, of liberating; and take in hand your tools, cut away the worthless stone, liberate the splendid statue and then you shall know yourself self-consciously as that which you really are, man in the image of God".¹

To sum up, God as ultimate reality is the pivot of Annie Besant's metaphysics. The only way to know it completely is not through sense perception or logical reasoning or intuition but through the conquest of lower nature in man; it is only by sinking into the depths of our own being, by searching within that God can be realized.

(C) S O U L

Closely related to the conception of God is the conception of soul in the philosophy of Annie Besant. Metaphysically soul is not different in essence from God

1. Annie Besant: "Spiritual Life for the Man of the World" pp. 19-21.

or the Absolute reality. Annie Besant means by the soul "a living, self-conscious intelligence showing forth mental attributes at will, and able to show forth attributes higher than mental as it grows, develops and asserts itself on higher planes than the physical and the astral".¹ At another place Annie Besant defines Soul as "the intermediate state between the Spirit and the body, that which gathers experience, that which passes through the various worlds in the universe, and returns ultimately with the experience it has gathered to its primal home in God".² Soul transcends time and space and is the basis of the Unity by its multiplicity of manifestations. Annie Besant believed that there is but the One in All, in Everything; the lowest dust beneath your feet has the One within it; the highest Deva in the highest heaven is but another expression of the One".³

Epistemologically, also, the basis of our belief in the existence of soul is the same as that of God. When we try to know God we at the same time have an experience of Soul. Radhakrishnan also approves this point when he says "In the spiritual experience itself, the barriers between the self and the ultimate reality drop away. In the moment of its highest insight, the self becomes aware

1. Annie Besant: "Proofs of the Existence of the Soul" the essay given in the book 'Psychology', p.59.

2. Annie Besant: "A Christian Doctrine: Reincarnation", p.9.

3. Annie Besant: "Theosophy and Life", Deeper Problems", p.23.

not only of its own existence but of the existence of an omnipresent spirit of which it is, as it were, a focussing we belong to the real and the real is mirrored in us".¹ Annie Besant notices a transcendental consciousness in man which is the cardinal basis of the concept of Atma or Soul in the Hindu philosophy. Annie Besant considers the empirical self as the reflection of the metaphysical self.

Immortality of the Soul: According to Annie Besant Soul is immortal and never dies, but it develops by degrees from lower soul to the higher soul. Soul carries on some experiences acquired in one life to the other. Annie Besant writes "when the Soul first passes through the gateway of death there will be scarcely anything for it to carry on into this higher condition, hardly any experience which it can use for the development, as it were, of mental faculty. Still, the very few experiences that it has acquired during its first life in the body, which are not Kamic, will be carried on".²

The pilgrimage of Soul is very long. In order to become a liberated Soul it has to shun all desires and attachments with the world, then only the soul can achieve Nirvana or liberation. Annie Besant writes about Soul that when "stage after stage it has developed mind, where

1. Radhakrishnan, S: "An Idealist View of Life", pp. 103-4.

2. Annie Besant: "Birth and Evolution of the Soul", p. 31.

stage after stage it has purified intellect, when it has got rid of desires, when it has become a liberated Soul, when it has renounced the going onward for the sake of humanity, when it has remained within the sphere of earth for helping man until the cycle of humanity is completed, then entering into Nirvana, there comes the state of All-consciousness, of Bliss".¹

Annie Besant fully believes that the Soul having worked through its pilgrimage from the lower position to the highest, accumulating experiences, shakes off the compound individuality and achieves its immortality, enters God, freeing from the round of births and rebirths. Annie Besant writes "He builds the living Egos of men.... and ultimately unites them in Himself, that is the All".²

(D) K A R M A

Annie Besant was a Hindu by adoption so she accepted all the beliefs adovated by Hinduism, she gladly accepted the truth conveyed by the concept of Karma. The concept of Karma stressed a constant activization of moral energy for the attainment of perfection and is completely opposed to the predistination of a few chosen souls as conceived by John Calvin. The theosophy, to which Annie Besant was very closely attached, has a special place for Karma

1. Ibid. p.53.

2. Annie Besant: "The Self and the Sheaths", p.24.

philosophy in its philosophical system and so Annie Besant wrote and delivered her some of the lectures on Karma philosophy.

Karma, a Sanskrit word, literally means 'action'. The main conception of Karma is 'as a man soweth, so shall he also reap'. As all actions are affects flowing from preceding causes and as each effect becomes a cause of future effects, this idea of cause and effects is an essential part of the idea of Karma. The word Karma is used for causation. "Karma is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity. It is the embodiment of the mind and will of God. God is its supervisor, Karmadhyaksah".¹

Annie Besant writes that Karma is "the law of causation, the law of cause and effect".² Karma underlies all special laws, all causes and effects. It is a universal condition whereon all other laws depend. So long as any one is related to matter -- human beings, animals, vegetables -- so long is one within Karmic law. No one can go outside the Law of Karma. "The principle of Karma reckons with the material or the context in which each individual is born. While it regards the past as determined, it allows that the future is only conditioned. The spiritual element in man allows him freedom within the

1. Radhakrishnan, S: "The Hindu View of Life", p.73.

2. Annie Besant: "The Ancient Wisdom", p.271.

limits of his nature. Man is not a mere mechanism of instincts. The spirit in him can triumph over the automatic forces that try to enslave him. The Bhagavad Gita asks us to raise the self by the self. We can use the material with which we are endowed to promote our ideals. The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past Karma",¹ which has an ample scope for genuine rational freedom for a man.

Working out of Karma: The study of Karma is a very complicated subject therefore it would be proper to sub-divide the subject and then study the sub-divisions one by one in order to understand Annie Besant's approach to the concept of Karma.

Every man sends forth three classes of energies in his ordinary life. These energies belong respectively to the three worlds that a man inhabits: "mental energies on the mental plane, giving rise to the causes we call thoughts; desire energies on the astral plane, giving rise to these we call desires; physical energies around by these; and working on the physical plane, giving rise to the causes we call actions".² In order to trace intelligently the part played by these three classes of energies in Karma, it would be useful to study each of these in its workings:-

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1. The Hindu View of Life, p.75.
 2. The Ancient Wisdom, pp.272-73.

(i) Thoughts: The first of these classes is composed of our thoughts. Thought is a very powerful factor in the creation of human Karma. Thoughts are the vibrations which give rise to forms of mental images, which shape and mould our mental body. Every thought modifies the mental body and the mental faculties in each successive life are made by thinkings of the previous lines. Annie Besant writes: A man can have no thought-power, no mental ability, that he has not himself created by patiently repeated thinkings; on the other hand, no mental image that he has thus created is lost, but remains as material for faculty, and the aggregate of any group of mental images is built into a faculty which grows stronger with every additional thinking or creation of a mental image, of the same kind".¹

On the law, explained above, the man can gradually make for himself the mental character he desires to possess. In the process of working up the mental images of a man death does not bring any stoppage in the work, the man brings back this faculty with him to his next birth on the physical plane. Thus the mental images created in one life appear as mental characteristics and tendencies in another.

(ii) Desires: The mental images set up vibrations which produce some secondary forms, which are generally,

1. Ibid. p.276.

being mingled with desire, take up some astral matter, Annie Besant refers to these secondary thought-forms as "astro-mental images".¹

This second great class of energies is composed of desires. These desires mould and shape after death. Annie Besant writes "when the desires are bestial, drunken, cruel, unclean, they are the fruitful causes of congenital diseases, of weak and diseased brains, giving rise to epilepsy, catlepsy and nervous diseases of all kinds, of physical malformations and deformities, and, in extreme cases, of monstrosities".²

Desires, according to Annie Besant, always attract the man towards an environment in which they may be gratified. Desires for earthly things draw a man towards the place where the objects of desire are most readily obtainable and therefore a man is born according to the desires of the past lives.

(iii) Actions: The third great class of energies, appearing on the physical plane, are known as actions, generate much Karma by their effects on others, but only slightly effect directly the Inner Man. They are effects of the past thinkings and desire of a man, and the Karma

1. Annie Besant: 'Karma', p.25.

2. The Ancient Wisdom, p.279

they represent is far the most part exhausted in their happening. When the actions are often repeated, they set up a habit of the body which determines the non-human environment of a man. Annie Besant writes that "the favourable or unfavourable nature of the physical surroundings into which we are born depends on the effects of our previous actions".¹

The Kinds of Karma: According to Annie Besant, man has the "ripe Karma" over which man has no power of choice. This is fixed by the choice the man has made in his past, so he requires to discharge the liabilities he has contracted in his previous lives. Out of all the Karma of the past there is a certain amount which is used in the limits of a single life but there are some kinds of Karma which can not be worked out in a single physical body, but would require other bodies, other than one, for their expression.

Annie Besant gives the following kinds of Karma:-

(i) Inevitable actions: Every action is the final expression of a series of thoughts. If persistently thoughts of the same kind are reiterated, a point of saturation is reached, if the thought is good one it will result in good response and a bad thought in a bad response.

1. The Ancient Wisdom, p.281.

(11) Accumulated Karma: According to Annie Besant the past evil thinking makes a crust of evil habits around a man which imprison him and make a evil life of him. But as the lives are a continuous process, so sometimes the soul develops noble qualities and so the crust of past evil is thrown out in one life and the soul comes forth free. The accumulated Karma which is the result of the thought forces gained in different lives, is always subject to modifications. Annie Besant firmly believes that the accumulated Karma consists of "tendencies, strong or weak, according to the thought-force that has gone to their making, and these can be further strengthened or weakened by fresh streams of thought-force sent to work with or against them".¹

Collective Karma: According to Annie Besant man is the result of collective thoughts which are woven with desires and activities of groups. The play of Karmic forces upon each as a member of the group introduces a new factor into the Karma of the individuals. So the Karma of a group is the resultant of the interacting forces of the individual composing it, and all the individuals are carried along in the direction of that resultant.

1. Annie Besant: The Ancient Wisdom, p.291.

The Karma Marga: Annie Besant has a firm belief in the Karma Marga theory advocated by the Hindu philosophy. She writes "this Karma Marga leads man to plunge into action of every kind, to rush out after objects of every description, to go restlessly seeking satisfaction by way of the external universe, always trying to get more and more and more, always to accumulate more and more largely, and chiefly by increasing activity by greater energy of motion, by increased concentration of effort, by incessant action, to find the Self".¹

In Annie Besant's views man is moved to action, at first, by desire for its fruit. He merely desires to enjoy. Later on the man, treading the Path of Karma, is moved by a desire for a somewhat higher fruit and that develops in him the quality of mobility. He comes exceedingly active but the actions are performed with a desire for fruit, which may be of two kinds:-

Firstly, the desire to enjoy the result of his action, whether it may be in this world, or whether it may happen to be in another. The man's activities might work entirely for fruit, giving up a thing here that he might gain much more elsewhere. He renounces all objects of

1. Annie Besant: "The Three Paths to Union with God", p. 5.

the senses and finds peace in the solitude of recluse life, but to his disappointment he discovers that not by running away from the objects of desire can desire itself be extinguished. For desire is not extinguished by external withdrawal from the objects of desire.

Secondly, from the freedom from desire the Karma Marga is to be trodden. Annie Besant writes, "Freedom from action will not be won by the bodily abstinence from activity. The path of action must yet be trodden before the soul may be free. The freedom is won on the path itself by learning a deeper lesson than the removal of the body from the city to the jungle.....He learns that he must act, but that the motive must be changed. He must tread the path of action, but the motive is to be new and divine in its character".¹ Here on the path of Karma the man tastes the joy of the God, there begins to flow in the man the bliss of the Self. He learns to renounce and to stand without attachment to the lower, and the higher flows in and fills his being and he knows himself as one with the Supreme.

The educational philosophy of Annie Besant has been based, to a great extent, on the doctrine of Karma. It leads her to see in the child the principles of thoughts,

1. Ibid. p.13.

desires and actions. Annie Besant thinks that though, no doubt, a child is in the grip of Karma and all his actions are governed by it, "but by a knowledge of Karma he can change his nature.....He is not in the grip of an inevitable destiny, imposed upon him from outside, he is in a world of law, full of natural forces which he can utilize to bring about the state of things which he desires".¹ Annie Besant is confident that a child can change his Karmic route if he is determined to do so. "Knowledge and will -- that is what he needs. He must realize that Karma is not a power which crushes, but a statement of conditions out of which invariable results occur".²

Annie Besant fully believes that with the knowledge of Karma a man "can modify, change, remake on other lines the nature which is the inevitable outcome of his previous desires, thoughts and actions".³ Thus a devoted teacher can mould the life of a child to healthy channels if he has a thorough understanding of the Karma of a child.

(E) Y O G A

Yoga, according to Annie Besant is "the science of sciences" and "the way by which a man may hasten his evo-

1. Annie Besant: "A Study of Karma", p.21.

2. Ibid. pp.21-22.

3. Ibid. p.

lution, expand his consciousness and rise into union with the Supreme".¹ To her Yoga was destined to give the direct training for the liberation of the soul from the wheel of births and deaths.

Annie Besant's two books on Yoga entitled "Yoga" (1893) and "An Introduction to Yoga" (1908) are her lectures which she delivered at the Theosophical Conventions. In these books her views about Yoga are explained in details.

Annie Besant finds the general teachings of Yoga in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Sutras of Patanjali. She gives two great methods of Yoga -- one related to the Self and the other to the Not-Self -- by one method a man can tread the path of knowledge by buddhi or the pure reason, and by the other the same path is tread by manas or the concrete mind. Annie Besant writes "The one is the path of the metaphysician; the other is the path of the scientist".² She considers that by the metaphysical method Self can be sought only by the Self, and by the scientific method Self is sought by the Not-Self.

While explaining the path of metaphysics, Annie Besant finds that the Self is within the man, "who tries to strip away vesture after vesture, envelope after

1. Annie Besant: "Hinduism, a Convention Lecture", p.33.

2. Annie Besant: An Introduction to Yoga, p.88.

envelope, and by a process of rejecting them he reaches the glory of the unveiled Self".¹ The metaphysician's method is always strenuous, long-sustained, patient meditation. It is essential for the man who seeks the Self by the Self to have imperious faith.

On the other hand, in the way of the scientist, Annie Besant believes that the man must use the concrete and active manas, in order to understand scientifically the universe. By a close and regorous study of every changing form in which the Self has veiled himself, the man can find the real among the unreal, the eternal among the changing, the Self amid the diversity of forms.

To Annie Besant Yoga as a science is both a theory and a practice. Yoga is never taught, save from mind to mind, from the teacher to the taught; it is neither a matter for the platform, nor is it a matter for discussion. Annie Besant writes "Discussion has no place in true Yoga. Discussion belongs to the intellect not to the Spirit; and Yoga is a matter of the Spirit and not of the intellect".²

According to Annie Besant there are three faculties which need thorough development for obtaining a success in Yoga. These are: (a) Strong desire, (b) Strong will, and (c) Keen and broad intelligence. These three

1. Ibid. p.88.

2. Annie Besant: "Yoga", p.5.

capacities must be fully unfolded in order that the practice of Yoga may be possible. Annie Besant suggests "If your mind is very unsteady, if it is a butterfly mind like a child's, you must make it steady. That comes by close study and thinking. You must unfold the mind by which you are to work".¹

(F) THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Annie Besant gave great importance to the problem of evil. She believed that "behind the "Mystery of Evil" there is hidden some priceless truth"². Though evil pertains to imperfection but that imperfection is necessary in a universe.

Annie Besant considered evil to be a necessary part of manifestation, she wrote that "evil does not exist absolutely in and by itself, but is relative, relative in that it exists in relation between things and not in the things themselves, and also because it varies with time, with succession of events, and with the progress of the universe".³

In explaining the problem of evil Annie Besant took illustrations from the Hindu Philosophy. She writes "Evil does not exist in and by itself, as we may judge from the phenomena around us; evil, like good, lies in the

1. Annie Besant: "An Introduction to Yoga", p.139.

2. Ibid. p.2. "; "The Use of Evil, p.1.

3. Ibid. p.8. 2.

relationship between one thing and another; it is relative, not absolute. What we speak of as evil in one place may be not evil in another; for evolution implies his changing character, and what is good at one stage may be evil at another".¹

Annie Besant firmly believed that the evil does not reside in the things but in the relationship between them and certain other things. Illustrating her point in some detail Annie Besant said "You may have a violently vibrating body.....which would cause no pain, and the result of that active motion of the body would not be anything which you would recognize as evil.....By coming into contact with the body which is violently vibrating, and by receiving the blow, what we call the sensation of pain might arise. Now pain is regarded as part of the evil of the universe; pain is regarded as one of those things which are the results of what is called evil. But as a matter of fact, pain is the result of contact between two things which separately are innocuous, and arises from the inter-relation of those things which in their separate aspects are not individually pain-producing, but only imperfect, each by itself. Whe coming into relation with each other, they, as it were, work against each other;

1. Ibid. p.8.

then there comes out what we regard as evil, and the nature of the result will depend upon the relation between the two".¹

Annie Besant considered that evil has an important use of its own in developing the character of a man. She finds that every virtue has its opposite evil. Truth and falsehood, humility and pride, courage and cowardice, compassion and hatred are the pairs of opposites. In explaining the use of evil Annie Besant feels that one can develop truth save by struggling against the false, save by realizing that in the world around there is falsehood on every side. While suggesting the utility of evil Annie Besant says "Useful also is evil as a scourge that drives us to good".²

So in Anni Besant's philosophy the path of evil provides a challenge so that its path may be abstained so as to reach to a virtue needed by every noble man.

1. Ibid. pp.9-10.

2. Ibid. p.24.

(G) D H A R M A

In Annie Besant's philosophy Dharma is not a static ideal, which may be same at all times and at all places. To her Dharma is a dynamic system of duties which changes with the evolution of society. Dharma "is not a fixed code of mechanical rules, but a living spirit which grows and moves in response to the development of society".¹ The method of Dharma is that of experimental change. It is relative to time, place, circumstances, temperament and vocation.

Annie Besant, attached adequate importance to the Sanatana-dharma or Vaidika-dharma because this oldest of living religions, is considered by her, standing unrivalled in the depth and splendour of its philosophy. This dharma is adapted to every human need. Writing about Sanatana-dharma Annie Besant says "the more it is studied, the more does it illuminate the intellect and, satisfy the heartwho learns something of it is laying up for himself a sure increase of happiness, a sure consolation in trouble, for the rest of his life".²

To Annie Besant Dharma is not merely a set of beliefs having no necessary connection with the daily life of humanity, but it is the very principles of a healthy and

1. Radhakrishnan, S: 'The Heart of Hindustan', p.18.

2. Annie Besant: Sanatana Dharma, P.13.

beneficient life. Therefore to know these principles and act upon them, is to be a true Aryan and to tread the sure road to happiness, individual as well as general.

Explaining Dharma in details, Annie Besant wrote "Dharma.....includes two things -- the inner nature at the point it has reached, and the law of its growth for the next stage. For every man Dharma is to be declared. The first Dharma is that of 'service'. No matter in what land the souls may be born, when they have passed through the earlier stages, their inner nature demands the discipline of service and that they should learn by service the qualities that are needed for growth into the next stage. At this stage the power of independent action is very limited. At this comparatively early stage, there is more tendency to yield to impulse from without than to show a developed judgement, choosing a particular course from within.....The next stage.....the Dharma of that soul is to evolve all the qualities which are now ready for evolution, and are brought out by leading the life which the inner nature demands, i.e., by taking up some occupation which the next stage requires".¹

But the scope of Dharma is more comprehensive. It is everything to which an individual is bound. Dharma

1. Annie Besant: Dharma, pp.37-40.

is right action. It stands for both the truth of things as well as the law of evolution. Every form of life, every group of men has its dharma, which is the law of its being, vice is opposition to it. Dharma inculcates duty not only towards those who are closely related within the family circle but also towards the inanimate constituents of the universe".¹ The system of duties relevant to social relations may be called social Dharma which, according to Annie Besant, has a great significance in the social life of the society.

Annie Besant greatly emphasized the importance of philosophical and religious development of a man according to Dharma as the starting point of any moral and spiritual advancement. She recommends certain stages of dharma. By treading these stages of dharma a man cannot achieve fulfillment. These stages help only to take a man, step by step, to a truthful life, gained by right actions. The important stages of dharma are 'Path of Service', 'Path of Self-sacrifice', 'Path of purity', 'Path of Truth', and 'Path of Self-devotion. All these paths imply the control of our lower nature especially the fear, anger, pride, hatred and falsehood. To achieve a success through these paths does not mean forced repression but surely a process

1. Heimann, B: Indian and Western Philosophy, p.69.

of sublimation. For sublimating the negative instincts Annie Besant attaches great importance to performance of actions and recommends prayer, silence and service as a panacea for the religious ills of a man.

In achieving a true Dharma Annie Besant recommended a stage of teaching. She wrote "The soul must have assimilated all lower experience before he can teach. If he had not been through all those previous stages, and obtained wisdom through obedience and exertion and combat, how could he be a teacher? He has reached the stage of evolution where the natural expansion of his inner nature is to teach his more ignorant brethren.. These qualities are not artificial. They are inborn qualities of nature and they show themselves wherever they exist".¹ Annie Besant, being a true educationist, did not favour imposing the ideals of the teacher on the others. She had a thorough understanding of the psychological advancement in her times and believed in the individual differences of the children. She warned the teachers, when she said "Place your own ideal as high as you can set it. But do not impose your ideal upon your brother, the law of whose growth may be entirely different from yours".²

To Annie Besant standing off on some high peak of

1. Annie Besant: Dharma, p.43.

2. Ibid. p.45.

spirituality and preaching a doctrine of self-sacrifice to young children was a useless venture. She advocated plain methods in educating the young mind, she writes "In teaching the young soul, use his higher selfishness to destroy the lower.....Make your aspirations high. They are the germs of powers.....climb towards it gradually, lest we fail to reach it at all."¹

For Annie Besant Dharma is a basis on which she proposes to build the whole conduct of life -- social, political, religious and educational.

(H) NISHKAMA BHAKTI (Disinterested devotion)

To love the Self without any interest is Nishkama Bhakti or disinterested devotion. It is one of the ways to Moksha or liberation. The other ways are Jnana or Wisdom and Karma or Action.

In her metaphysics Annie Besant gave a great importance to Nishkama Bhakti. She gets maximum support from Bhagavad-Gita where Lord Krishna says "The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach. Those verily who, renouncing all actions in Me and intent on Me, worship meditating on Me, with whole-hearted Yoga, these I speedily lift up from the ocean of

death and existence, O Partha, their minds being fixed on Me".¹ This devotion which Lord Krishana described in Bhagavad-Gita, this fixing of the mind, this constant meditation, this earnest worship -- these constitute the real attributes of disinterested devotion.

Bhakti is always directed towards a Being and disinterested devotion is towards the Supreme Ishvara. Annie Besant says: "In the Hindu faith, and in other faiths as well, that the Supreme manifests Himself not only as the Lord of the universe, but also in the form of man, and that in that human form He specially arouses devotion, worship, love; presenting all the attractiveness which pleases the human heart, and the beauty which captivates the human imagination".²

While studying Annie Besant's philosophy one finds a divine human form occupies the central alter of worship and there she recognizes the Ishvara himself, the One without a second, having all human emotions within Him. Annie Besant stated "whether it be under the sacred name of

2. Annie Besant: The Three Paths to Union with God, pp. 46-47.

Ramchandra or Shri Krishna whether it be under the name of Christ or the name of the Buddha, you will find that humanity specially craves to worship a Being, and seeks in devotional emotion that satisfaction which no abstract conception of infinity can afford. To those who tread the Path of Bhakti this object of worship must be the goal of the Path".¹

Narada, the great sage and Bhakta, explaining the nature of Bhakti writes that Bhakti is an "extreme devotion to some one"² and the element of devotion to an individual is of its very nature. Narada gives a very clear definition of Bhakti when he says "It is surrendering all actions to God, and feeling the greatest misery in forgetting God".³ Annie Besant suggests that the spirit of the true Bhakta is "all the life surrendered to the object of devotion".⁴

Annie Besant gave some preliminary steps of Bhakti which are essential for finding God.

The first step to be followed by a devotee is to "practise freedom from desire -- his only desire must be directed to God; there must be no room for any other desire in his heart".⁵ Annie Besant suggests that the first step is not complete if a man finds it enough to fix his heart

1. Ibid. p.47.

2. Ibid. p.48. Here reference has been made of 'Narada Sutra translated by E.T.Sturdy, p.19.

3. Ibid. p.49.

4. Ibid. p.49.

5. Ibid. p.55.

on the Supreme. She writes "That practice may lead into a life wanting in the characteristics of true Bhakti. He may find delight in his meditation, joy from contemplation, and thus may become forgetful of others and may worship for the pleasure of worshipping. But the true Bhakta does not seek to gain; he seeks to give, to give constantly, perpetually, in order that he may overcome the selfishness of human nature and eradicate the grasping tendency of the mind".¹

The second step is to "do good to others".² Annie Besant suggests that for true Bhakti, the life of a Bhakta (devotee) must be that one of constant service and continual assistance to all those who are in need. She writes "give, give, give, constantly, for giving is of the very nature of love. Love asks for nothing, save the right to spend; love asks for no return, no gratitude. It asks for no enjoyment for itself. It asks only to be allowed to love, to spread itself out in every direction, and make all happy in the embrace of the lover.....where there is no free giving there is no place for God."³

The third step in the Bhakti Marga is the company of good men.....Those who are more advanced than ourselves, those who spend some of their time in conversing on subjects

1. Ibid. p.56.

2. Ibid. p.56.

3. Ibid. p.57.

of a spiritual nature, or who sit together in silence meditating on the Object of devotion, are the persons whose company should be sought, rather than the company of the worldly and the frivolous".¹

The fourth steps suggests the study of good books. Annie Besant declared that those books must be read which "stimulate devotion and set before us the noble examples of the saints and the sages of the world".²

Annie Besant was confident that after following the above mentioned stages "there comes a time, when Ishvara diligently sought, reverently worshipped, persistently followed, though yet He was not seen, reveals Himself to His worshipper, and the Supreme is seen.....Though only a glimpse of His beauty be caught, though only one gleam of that glory has come down and touched the heart of the devotee, the inner man is changed; the whole heart is revolutionised; the back is turned upon the externalities of the earth, and without effort the face is turned to God".³

In concluding the concept of disinterested devotion Annie Besant got full support from the Hindu philosophy. Her ideal devotee is Arjuna, the Pandava, and the Supreme Ishvara is Lord Krishana. When devotee sees the Supreme face to face,

1. Ibid. p.58.

2. Ibid. p.59.

3. Ibid. p.60.

he attains wisdom. Then Lord Krishana no longer says that Man shall tread the path to My Supreme abode, but he says, "He, the wise, verily is Myself".¹ That is the goal of the Bhakti Marga. Annie Besant writes, "So it is with the soul and its Lord; separated for the purposes of worship and adoration, intended to draw out the soul and all its powers, the perfected soul becomes one with its Lord -- one for service, one for help, one for saving the world as He helps it. In this communion between the lover and the beloved..... the Bhakta becomes the Savior of the world; he is very God, and all that God can do, he who is one with Him can also do, in the creation and dissolution of the worlds".² Here Arjuna, the Bhakta, was not an ordinary man, but a man who, after a number of past lives, had climbed higher and higher towards the perfection of humanity. Arjuna had disinterested devotion for Krishna because he was at a stage where he did not need any fruit which may inspire him to action -- action for duty's sake and not for the sake of fruit.

II - Annie Besant's Faith in the Ethical Concepts:

Annie Besant had a great fascination for Hindu Ethics. Her admiration for Hindu Ethics can be seen when she stated with full confidence that "there is no religion which has

1.

The Bhagavad-Gita vii. 18 translated by Annie Besant, p. 138

2. Op.cit. The Three Paths, pp. 63-64.

put forward so perfect a system of Ethics from the philosophical, the scientific, as well as the emotional, side as the great Hindu faith".¹ Annie Besant's ethical doctrines are characterized by the same desire to harmonise all extremes which are noticed in her metaphysical concepts. She tries to show, through her writings and lectures, that the highest ethical ideal is that which satisfies the whole of human nature.

To Annie Besant ethics is a systematized science of conduct having some moral principles on which a man should act. In explaining ethics Annie Besant writes "The conduct of man has reference to his surroundings as well as to himself. We have to ascertain what is good in relation to those who form our surroundings, as well as in relation to the time and place of the actor; and we may take a wider and wider view of our surroundings, according to the knowledge we possess. We have also to ascertain what is good for ourselves and in relation to ourselves. What is good for one man may not be good for another man".²

To Annie Besant Ethical science is a relative science and not an absolute science because it is relative to the man himself and his surroundings. Its object is to bring

1. Annie Besant: 'The Relativity of Hindu Ethics', p. 1.

2. Annie Besant: 'Sanatana-Dharma', p. 275.

about peace and happiness by establishing right relations between all the human beings that belong to any community or a nation. Here Annie Besant does not limit the scope of ethics to a particular area but in her ethical system a great circle exists which goes not spreading outwards indefinitely and including larger and larger areas with in its circumference. Thus in Annie Besant's ethical system we hear about "family morality, social morality, national morality, international morality, human morality, inter-world morality".¹ Annie Besant admits that in the great circle in ethics the main purpose is to bring about happiness. To her happiness neither means the transitory pleasures of the senses nor even the more durable pleasures of the mind but it means the deep, inner, enduring bliss which is the satisfaction of the Self.

In Annie Besant's system of philosophy knowledge of different religions, especially Hinduism, provided the ultimate data upon which she built her Ethical science. Emphasizing the influence of religion on ethics she writes "Morality has only one basis, on which it is built up, as a house is built on its foundation. And just as a house will become crooked and fall, if it be built on a shaky foundation, so will any morality fall which is not built on that sound basis"² of religion.

1. Ibid. p.276.

2. Ibid. p.279.

After explaining the ethical background of Annie Besant's thought, in brief, it would be proper to proceed now to examine her views on some of the important ethical concepts.

(A) TRUTH

Every true philosopher tries to seek after Truth in the issues of life of his time and develop a school of thought for the guidance of the others. Annie Besant is no way an exception to it and as a great philosopher of her time she is also a great seeker after Truth and once she said that she wanted no other epitaph on her tomb but

"SHE TRIED TO FOLLOW TRUTH"¹

This simple statement shows a two-fold key to her greatness which stamped itself upon the world and made her one of the greatest 'servers' of mankind.

Etha Snodgrass Cook, writing on Annie Besant says "Truth was her goal, but a truth so luminous, so eternal that she could say not that she had achieved but only that she "tried" in her faithful striving".² Annie Besant's trial in seeking truth reveals both the genuineness of her own humility and the glory of an all-inclusive concept of truth capable of leading forward for ever so brilliant an intellect and so courageous a pioneer.

1.. Annie Besant: 'An Autobiography', p.459.

2. Etha Snodgrass Cook: "The Follower of Truth" published in the Centenary Book, p.169.

Annie Besant had a firm belief in the motto of the Theosophical Society which reads as "There is no religion higher than Truth". Annie Besant has lived truth all her life and has dwelt on it and worked for it in the immense enhancement of her usefulness to the world and its suffering millions.

Annie Besant adopted her nom de guerre as "Ajax" for writing her articles in the newspapers and journals owned by Charles Bradlaugh, the idea of the name suggested by the famous statue of "Ajax crying for light" matched with her philosophy of truth. Annie Besant writes "The cry through the darkness for light, even though light should bring destruction, was one that awoke the keenest sympathy of response from my heart:-

"If our fate be death
Give light, and let us die."

To see, to know, to understand, even though the seeing blind, though the knowledge sadden, though the understanding shatter the dearest hopes -- such has ever been the craving of the upward-striving mind in man. Some regard it as a weakness, as a folly, but I am sure that it exists most strongly in some of the noblest of our race; that from the lips of those who have done most in lifting the burden of ignorance from the over-strained and bowed shoulders of a STUMBLING world has gone out most often into the empty darkness the pleading, impassioned cry: "Give Light "

The light may come with a blinding flash, but it is light none the less, and we can see".¹

Annie Besant needed also a light to fill the places of darkness and that light was Truth, which she constantly shed and which she unceasingly searched throughout her life.

Etha Snodgrass Cook writes: Truth to Annie Besant was not mere validity of fact, not coldly scientific law discovered from its effect upon humanity; but rather timeless and all-inclusive principles of life adequate to serve her fellowmen in all walks of life as well as through the ages".²

Annie Besant believed in the great strength of Truth she writes: "One thing no power can do is to trample out the Truth by force, by persecution, even by death itself; for Truth is immortal, and from the ashes of one slain messenger of Truth arise hundreds of others to re-echo the message that was brought".³ Annie Besant affirms the reality of Absolute Truth because it is only a fond hope of man, just as appearance is perceivable in Reality, the absolute Truth is pre-supposed in relative truths. Annie Besant writes, "All truths are fundamentally one, as all forces may be combined into one universal force".⁴

The Form of Truth:

Annie Besant suggested that people should not believe a truth which they cannot understand or live upon or act

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1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", pp.277-78.
 2. Etha Snodgrass Cook: 'The Fellower of Truth', p.169.
 3. Annie Besant: "Duties of the Theosophist", p.2.
 4. Annie Besant: "Australasian Lectures", p.137.

out in the world because without action every belief is futile. The religion of a man must be practical one, Annie Besant writes "truth is only truth for you when you have learned to live it. And the man who has learned to live it. And the man who has learned to live one fragment of truth will find truth herself come to him with open arms; for she only gives herself to those who are willing to surrender themselves to her, and to live every truth that she imparts".¹

Annie Besant believed that the form of truth must suit our limited intelligence, it must be presented in such a form which may enable us "to assimilate those truths at our stage of understanding. It is exactly the same as in giving food to people. If you fed a baby on the food given to grown up, it would choke and die.....So it is in the matter of truth. We want truth in a form that we can assimilate, so that we can grow up by it, just as the baby wants food in a form that it can assimilate; otherwise it cannot grow. If these great truths come thundering down upon us just as they are, they would crush us and we should be broken up by them. The Masters are wise, being as it were educated mothers and not ordinary mothers, and so they are careful in feeding their spiritual babes".²

1. Annie Besant: "Mysticism", p.29.

2. Annie Besant: "The Inner Government of the World", pp.2-3.

2. Annie Besant: "Talks with a Class", p.70.

Conditions for Seeking the Truth:

If the ultimate truth is attainable, we would like to know, what are the conditions laid down by Annie Besant which a seeker after truth must satisfy?

Firstly, a seeker must have an inquiring spirit, a deep urge to know what is real and what is not real. In the book 'The Inner Government of the World' Annie Besant writes "No man can really believe a truth, until he has grown to the extent which enables him to see it as truth for himself.....The Truth in you recognizes the truth outside you, when once the inner vision is open".¹ In another book, entitled "The Theosophy and the Theosophical Society" Annie Besant writes "Truth is only truth when intellect can perceive it; only then it is truth to any individual man; only the conditions of knowing the truth, of seeking the truth, is to develop to the point whence that truth is visible. The moment you see it, you must believe it; until you see it, you ought not to say that you know it".²

Secondly, the seeker must learn to discriminate between the eternal and ephemeral and must not allow himself to be deluded by mere appearances.

Thirdly, the seeker after truth has to see that his

1. Annie Besant: "The Inner Government of the World", pp.2-3.

2. Annie Besant: "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society", pp.2-3.

mind is kept free from all prejudices and attachments to the fruit of action. In her book "The Ideals of Theosophy" Annie Besant writes "All that you need for the finding of truth is a pure heart, an eager intellect, a clean life. These are the conditions which must be fulfilled by all who would know the truth, the truth is Brahman, the EternalBy imposing a creed you may make hypocrites, but never knower of truth".¹

Fourthly, it is necessary for the seeker to acquire self-knowledge by turning the eye inward and purify his heart by practising virtues such as tranquility, self-control, charity and compassion. For a seeker after truth, writes Annie Besant "the value of effort does not lie in the immediate success, as success may be counted by you and me; that efforts, directed to noble ends, are never lost, but are an ever-accumulating force, and the future success could not work itself out correctly and perfectly if one of those efforts were lacking, if one of those struggles were not made.....The right action ought always to be performed, even though inevitable failure waits to meet it".²

Lastly, the seeker must not only have a keen desire for knowledge but also have an intense yearning after liberation. Annie Besant considers it essential that a seeker after

1. Annie Besant: "The Ideals of Theosophy", p.9.

2. Annie Besant: Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gita, p.16.

truth must study the great fundamental truths of all religions and remain prepared to cross the threshold of conscious Divinity and realize the Self.

The Attainment of Truth:

In the system of Annie Besant's moral philosophy it must be understood that for the attainment of truth, which means the spiritual illumination, only intellectual discipline and moral purity are by themselves not enough. They are only the preparatory grounds and merely pave the way for the attainment of a higher ideal, the ultimate truth.

According to Annie Besant there are three possible steps in attaining the ultimate truth. These are: (a) Prayer, (b) Meditation and (c) Divine grace.

To her prayer¹ is not of the nature of petition or adoration but of contemplation. By meditation she means a whole-hearted engagement and devotion to the work. But all knowledge and morality, prayer and meditation are useless and inadequate to lead to the ultimate truth, in Annie Besant's system of thought, unless the blessings of the Masters are not received in the form of abounding Grace. By 'Masters' Annie Besant means those just and perfect men whom we in India call Rishis or ascetics and who, according

1. Jinarajadasa, C: an article on "Mrs. Besant's poems in the New India of 20th October 1917 gives one poem of Annie Besant on prayer, where she wrote: "In musing, strength must come to dare,
Petitions are but empty air,
Brave action is the only prayer,
Thus learn to pray"

to Annie Besant's belief, have helped, guided and inspired Indian society at all times.

(B) T O L E R A N C E

In Annie Besant's philosophical thought the concept of tolerance has an important place. Annie Besant preached tolerance to the people because she had a belief in the One Self, and the reverent acceptance of the infinite variety of Its intellectual manifestation. In India to practise toleration is a necessity because of the complexity of religions and languages.

Annie Besant writes: "Tolerance has always been a characteristic of Hinduism, which has never sought to convert men from their own faith, nor to impose on those within its own pale any special form of intellectual belief. The variety of philosophic views embraced within its circle, as shown in the six Darsanas, testifies to the tolerance and wide-mindedness which have ever marked it".¹

According to Annie Besant the liberal and noble teachings of Hinduism shaped the thoughts of every true Aryan, so that he may never fall into the error of trying to belittle or injure any of the religions of the world. The preachings of Hinduism has made every Hindu "bound to be tolerant even with the intolerant knowing that no evil can

1. Annie Besant: "Sanatana-Dharma", p.383.

be destroyed save by its opposite good".¹

Thus tolerance of the religious beliefs and views, as advocated by Annie Besant, should not be misunderstood to mean toleration of an acquiescence in the active infliction of wrong by the wicked on the righteous and the innocent. Annie Besant writes: "A good man, while forgiving as far as possible wrong done to himself, should endeavour to set right -- by gentle means at first, and, if these do not succeed, then by stern ones in accordance with the law of the land -- all wrong inflicted on others".²

In building her theory of toleration Annie Besant gets full support from the Bhagavad-Gita where Lord Krishna expressly laid upon Arjuna the duty of tolerance. Annie Besant, under the influence of the Bhagavad-Gita suggests that any good action should not be mistaken "for intolerance which is only of the nature of counselling or education, even though it be the education of public opinion, or constitutional and sober endeavour to wean men from injurious ways, or a thoughtful discussion with the express object of eliciting truth".³

Annie Besant, having a firm faith in the concept of tolerance, taught it to her students of Central Hindu College

1. Annie Besant: "Some Problems of Life", p.6.

2. 'Sanatana-Dharma', p.386.

3. Ibid. p.386.

Benares because she was very sure that this great ideal is essential in teaching mutual respect to the youth of the country. Annie Besant was very particular and careful in inculcating the spirit of religious tolerance in her students because only with tolerance the religious peace and religious respect could be imbibed.

Annie Besant warns the Indians against religious narrowism when she says: "Do not let your ship of nationality be shipwrecked on the rocks of religious hatred and religious suspicion. Learn mutual respect. Learn that each has something to learn from the religions of the rest of mankind: from Buddhism learn that heart of love and infinite compassion which is the great characteristic of the Law of the Buddha; from Christianity learn that spirit of self-sacrifice which is the great mark of Jesus, the Christ; from Hinduism learn that note of Law, of Order, incorporate in that untranslatable word, Dharma, from Zoroastrianism learn that spotless purity of thought and word and action, which is the distinguishing mark of Zoroastrianism; from Islam learn that realisation of the Unity of God, which is the insistent message of that faith. Why quarrel? Each faith has its own characteristics.....Let each learn from all, and quarrel with none".¹

1. Annie Besant: "A Plea for the Simpler Life of the East", given in a collection entitled "The Birth of New India", p.422.

Annie Besant was very well aware that intolerance has caused more human misery than any other of the many weaknesses of humanity. She said: "It would be impossible to measure or fully to estimate the bitter prejudices that have arisen, the tears that have been shed, the hearts that have been broken, the blood that has been poured out, the starvation and hatred that have been caused by religious persecution, by religious war".¹

Causes of Intolerance: Annie Besant gave a large number of causes which lead intolerance in the people of India. To Annie Besant, the causes are different because "the ways are different, because men's minds are different, because their hearts are different, because they have grown up along different lines of thinking, and have been accustomed in the immemorial past which lies behind each of us, which stretches backwards into the dawn of time, to a variety of religious beliefs, a variety of standpoints and of views".²

Cure of Intolerance: Annie Besant wanted to cure intolerance growing in people. She is quite aware of the fact that intolerance breeds hatred and hatred brings forth many social ills. She suggests few methods for curing intolerance.

Firstly, she recommends, to study with sympathy the controversial literature. She writes: "To study without

1. Annie Besant: "The Ideals of Theosophy", p.69.

2. Ibid. p.72.

sympathy is to see the blemishes; to study with sympathy is to see the lovelinesses. And you can never understand the beauty of a faith and its hold upon the minds of its adherents, until you study it with the eyes of love and sympathy, and feel in yourself the vibrations which it arouses in those to whom it appeals. Hence if you would be true lover of the Divine Wisdom, rise above the intolerance that would dictate to another into that liberty of the Spirit in which alone truth is found. Study what you do not agree with more than that with which you agree. Day by day familiarise yourself with the standpoints of others, rather than ever keeping your eyes fixed on an object from exactly the same spot; learn from those with whom you disagree more than from those you agree; and in that way you shall become many-sided as the many aspects of the truth itself".¹

Secondly, Annie Besant suggested to try to correct the natural intolerance of mankind by looking in every person and in every opinion for the good, rather than for the bad. She recommends "let your first impression of a book be the favourable one rather than the hostile; let the first impression of a man be of his virtues, rather than of his vices. For the better he seems to you, the more you are seeing of the Self that is trying to manifest through his mind and body".²

1. Ibid. pp.74-75.

2. Ibid. p.76.

In short Annie Besant's concept of tolerance tries to show human beings a respect and understanding of each other which will leave the mind untainted and will not allow to develop consciousness about religious differences.

(C) S E L F - S A C R I F I C E

Annie Besant's concept of Self-sacrifice was purely a Hindu concept which she builds up from the Bhagavad-Gita. To her self-sacrifice means not pain but joy. Explaining the concept Annie Besant writes, "It is not really self-denial but it is self-expression. You only think of sacrifice as pain.....because you look at it from the stand-point of the body. Look at it from the stand-point of the eternal Spirit and you will know that his joy and delight is in pouring himself out, and that it would be in self-repression that suffering would be found".¹

Annie Besant had a firm belief that by making a sacrifice of the self, a true self is realized but by giving one self to others does not mean that that sacrifice will bring any suffering to the person. She says "You realise your own divinity as you pour out your life on others. But sacrifice is not pain, it is delight. And just as the intellectual enjoyment of a splendid poem, or the emotional

1. Annie Besant: "The Immediate Future", p.98.

delight of some marvellous symphony, is a hundred times keener, more satisfying, and more delicious than the food with which you support the body, so is the joy of the Spirit that pours himself out more delightful and more joyous than the joy of intellect and emotion. As those transcend the body, so does the joy of the Spirit in turn transcend them; and only when you have learned the joy of giving, when you have found your own life grow mightier because you have emptied yourself into the life of others, only then will you know that the uttermost service is the most perfect freedom and that in giving one's life to others one finds the life eternal which is the very Self in man".¹

The Law of Sacrifice: The study of the Law of sacrifice follows on the study of the Law of Karma and the understanding of the Law of Sacrifice is as necessary for the world as the understanding of the Karma. Annie Besant writes "By an act of Self-sacrifice the LOGOS became manifest for the emanation of the universe, by sacrifice the universe is maintained, and by sacrifice man reaches perfection".² Annie Besant finds sacrifice as a central teaching of every religion.

In explaining the law of Self-sacrifice Annie Besant stated that law is "that all beings must live by the sacrifice of others, and therefore, that every being, as he

1. Ibid. pp.98-99.

2. Annie Besant: 'The Ancient Wisdom', p.303.

becomes self-conscious, must be ready to repay his debt by the sacrifice of himself".¹ To Annie Besant the law of self-sacrifice is not only found in the human being but it is also found among stones, vegetables and animals.

Annie Besant has written that "The stone is broken up for vegetable food; the vegetable is broken up for animal food; animals prey upon animals, and the strong devouring each other physically first, as food then in other ways. The Law of sacrifice is every where present in Nature, because the Lord is the Lord of Sacrifice and the first sacrifice is the Sacrifice of Himself. He is the Purusha, out of the parts of whose body the whole universe is made".²

(D) C O - O P E R A T I O N

Annie Besant was a great advocate of the concept of co-operation. She believed that in this age of political, economic and scientific struggles when neck-break competition

1. Annie Besant: "Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gita", p.118.

2. Ibid.p.119. Here reference is made of Bhagavad-Gita where Lord Krishna says (in ix, 27):

In this shloka Lord Krishna refers to self-sacrifice as he says "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerities, O Kaunteya, do thou that as an offering unto Me".

is ruling in its extremes, the concept of co-operation is very badly desirable. To the students of the Central Hindu College, Benaras Annie Besant taught the lesson of co-operation in place of competition. She firmly thinks that there cannot be a co-operative civilization without co-operators, she says "You cannot have co-operators without the development of the individual".¹

Annie Besant suggested that "you must have wise, powerful, energetic and strong-willed men in order to have able and effective co-operators, fit to direct the business of the Nation.....Hence you must have individualism first and co-operation second. Now in the midst of the present individualistic civilization, you have the spirit of self-sacrifice growing up.....where competition has gone to madness",² and where only the spirit of co-operation can solve the problems of civilization.

Annie Besant had a great regard and admiration for all movements of co-operative nature, actively engaged in educational, social, political and religious fields. But she has also a hatred for all non-co-operative movements working in India. She considered Gandhiji's non-co-operation Movement as "a most dangerous obstacle to India's progress",³ so far as it badly ruined the education of the Indian youth of that time.

1. Arundale, G.S. (edited), "The Great Vision", p.100.

2. Ibid. p.100.

3. Arundale, G.S. : "Annie Besant -- Builder of New India", p.87.

Annie Besant gave a very important place to the concept of co-operation in her educational and philosophical system when she expressed that if the spirit of co-operation is realized "then you come to a new conception. You imagine the building of a social system, in which every man who is born into it shall have the opportunity of developing every faculty he brings with him into the world. A social system wherein from every member of the society there shall be demanded social service according to his capacity, and to every member shall be given social helping according to his needs".¹ Thus by a co-operative spirit the life of society can be moulded to better ends.

1. Op.cit. 'The Great Vision', p.101.

CHAPTER - IV

PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF ANNIE
BESANT'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

All the great educationists of the world tried to bring forth their educational theories based on the principles of psychology, and Annie Besant is not an exception to this widely accepted truth. Annie Besant also planned to give, first, the psychological justifications to her ideas and then implemented them, as educational principles, in the educational institutions established by her in India. This clearly reveals that Annie Besant was primarily a psychologist and every thing else, afterwards.

Even in her earlier stages of life Annie Besant was very much interested in Psychology. When she was busy in her work for socialism, she was also trying to understand different aspects of psychological knowledge, which were rapidly developing in Europe at that time, but the study of materialism and socialism could not give sufficient knowledge of psychology to her. Writing in a letter to one of her close friend, W.T. Stead, Annie Besant said that she "could find no answer to problems of life and mind in Materialism, especially as touching --

1. Hypnotic and mesmeric experiments, clairvoyance, etc.
2. Double consciousness, dreams.
3. Effects on the body of mental conceptions.
4. Line between object and subject worlds.
5. Memory, especially as studied in diseases.
6. Diseased keenness of sense-perception.
7. Thought transference.
8. Genius, different types of character in family, etc."¹

So Annie Besant left the ranks of Socialism for ever and became a theosophist only for the sake of getting a thorough knowledge of psychology, with which Theosophy, as a science of psychology, was greatly brewing at that time. Annie Besant being a voracious reader of books, especially concerning the social and psychological topics, tried to refresh her knowledge of psychology from time to time. She did not feel shy to tell others openly about her ignorance of detailed knowledge of Psychology. It would be interesting to note that in 1886, Annie Besant felt worried that her psychological knowledge, she writes, "was not sufficient; that life and mind were other than, more than, I had dreamed. Psychology was advancing with rapid strides; hypnotic experiments were revealing unlooked of complexities in human consciousness, strange riddle of multiplex personalities, and

1. Stead, W. T.: "Annie Besant: A Character Sketch (1891)", p. 90.

most startling of all, vivid intensities of mental action when the brain, that should be the generator of thought, was reduced to a comatose state. Fact after fact came hurtling in upon me, demanding explanation I was incompetent to give. I studied the obscure sides of consciousness, dreams, hallucinations, illusions, insanity".¹

Annie Besant studied Sinnett's books and H.P.B.'s historic "Secret Doctrine" and thus was able to find a satisfactory knowledge concerning her doubts about psychology. In 1889 when Annie Besant joined Theosophy a vast field of psychology was flung open before her. At that time Theosophical thinkers were trying to collect knowledge from different religious and philosophical schools about man and his problems. Annie Besant studied all the works concerning theosophical psychology and tried to enrich that psychology with her life-long experience and thorough study. Annie Besant being a modern of moderns in psychology found the need for modern psychology in the life of a man like the need of a lamp in a dark place. She contributed a large number of books to the world of psychology.

In 1885 Annie Besant wrote the book "In the Outer Court" which contains two important chapters "Building of Character" and "Spiritual Alchemy". In these two essays

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", p.439.

Annie Besant gives broad principles and clear details of psychological knowledge.

In 1901 Annie Besant wrote "Thought Power: Its control and Culture" in which she presented a keen-edged tool, but one easily welded even by the inexpert to build the personal self nearer to the heart's desire. Her work on thought power antedates the later western schools of psychology concerning thought and memory training with the chapters on "Thought Transference" and "Concentration".

In 1904 Annie Besant delivered six lectures which were published as a book "Theosophy and Modern Psychology". In these lectures she dealt with the difficult paths of the sub- and super-consciousness, of Clairvoyance and Clairaudience. She also dealt the problems of fixed ideas, of premonitions, madness, genius etc.

The full knowledge of the psychology of consciousness was unfolded in Annie Besant's master piece in this field, "A Study of Consciousness" published in 1904. This book gives a deeper understanding of consciousness. In the second part of this book, essays on "Will, Desire and Emotions" are given in detail.

In 1907 Annie Besant carried the subject of psychology into another field, Yoga, with the lectures, and later the book "An Introduction to Yoga". That is, Yoga, the law of psychology, "the systematised knowledge of the unfolding of

unconsciousness applied to the individualised self. In this field of mystical psychology it is difficult to attain goal because the practice of Yoga is beyond the purview of an average person.

Annie Besant wrote a large number of other pamphlets on psychological topics, famous among them are "Thought-Forms," "The Laws of the Higher Life", "A Word on Man, His Nature and His Powers", "Emotion, Intellect and Spirituality", "On Moods", "Hypnotism", "Memory", "The Nature of Memory", "Clairvoyance and Mental Healing" etc.

In most of her pamphlets and books on Psychology, Annie Besant seems to draw her maximum knowledge from ancient wells of Aryan wisdom. She uses Hindu terms, in her psychological writings, taken mostly from the scriptures -- Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, and develops her theories in Indian setting. Annie Besant is not an arm chair academic psychologist, who constructs theories on the conclusions drawn by others; but she is a practical and, rather, mystical psychologist and develops her school of thought, having a firm faith in the truth of the mighty powers of hidden consciousness and is believed to have glimpsed the truth of the vast scheme of the universe, with life indwelling in all things.

Annie Besant has a deep faith in Indian Psychology and considers Indian psychological system as a most advanced system of science to interpret all the terms of

psychology intimately concerned with a man and his growth. Though Annie Besant takes Indian psychology as an advanced science, but she does not limit has psychology to Indian knowledge alone. To prove as an upto date science Annie Besant's psychology "holds its mind open to all new facts and truths; that is not content to march along a beaten track; that is willing to consider facts the most abnormal, provided only they are demonstrated to the reason.....The new psychology walks with its eyes open, it does not reject methods because they are new, nor facts because they are unknown".¹

Thus Annie Besant's new psychology does not remain contented with Hindu psychology only, but it also tries to arrange "into some kind of order the chaos of facts presented by modern psychologists",² and brings a synthesis of the Hindu school of psychology and modern European psychology in order to present New psychology.

To understand Annie Besant's psychology in its right perspective, it would be worthwhile to explain the main psychological terms interpreted by Annie Besant in her system. She has written in full details about consciousness, Character, Emotion, Desire, will and Thought-Power. Therefore, the present chapter will try to explain

1. Annie Besant: "Theosophy and the New Psychology", pp.9-10.

2. Ibid. Foreward.

these terms in brief with the help of Annie Besant's interpretation of them.

(A) Consciousness

To Annie Besant consciousness and life are identical. She regards that consciousness and life are "two names for one thing as regarded from within and from without. There is no life without consciousness; there is no consciousness without life. When we vaguely separate them in thought.....We find that.....consciousness turned inward by the name of life; and life turned by the name of consciousness. When our attention is fixed on unity we say life; when it is fixed upon multiplicity we say consciousness, and we forget that the multiplicity is due to, is the essence of, matter".¹

The modern name of consciousness is "awareness". But awareness cannot hang in the void. Awareness implies something of which it is aware, a duality at the least. Otherwise it does not exist. Awareness is essentially awareness of 'limitation' and secondarily awareness of 'others'. Awareness of others comes into being with what we call self-consciousness. So in understanding consciousness we come across inseparable dual terms such as consciousness - limitation, spirit-matter, life-form etc; they exist only in relation to each other.

1. Annie Besant: "A Study of Consciousness", pp.25-26.

In Annie Besant's system consciousness and matter definitely affect each other, because they are the two constituents of one whole. Annie Besant writes that they consist of such inseparable duality that "both appearing as they draw apart, both disappearing as they unite, and as they draw apart a relation exists ever between them".¹ Annie Besant tries to explain her concept of consciousness from the Hindu philosophical stand point. To her consciousness is the All, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Changeless, she writes, "Any reality found anywhere is drawn from consciousness. Hence everything which is thought, is"² consciousness.

In understanding the varied manifestations of consciousness it must be remembered that conscious has two facts, firstly, the consciousness of each man is a Unit, though it appears separate and different from each other, secondly, that all these Units themselves are the parts of the Absolute Consciousness. Annie Besant writes "we cannot too often remind ourselves that consciousness is one; that all apparently separate consciousnesses are truly one, as one sea might pour through many holes in an embankment. That sea-water might issue from the holes differently coloured, if the embankment were composed of differently coloured earths; but it would all be the same sea-water; analysed, it would all

1. Ibid. p.27. Their relationship is magnetic in character. It is of Substance and in it the essence of consciousness and essence of matter exist, polarized but not drawn apart.

2. Ibid. p.29.

show the presence of the same characteristic salts".¹ So to Annie Besant, all consciousnesses from the same ocean of Absolute consciousness show identical character, though composed of same kind of matter, act in the same kind of behaviour in life.

Annie Besant is very critical about the interpretation of the individual consciousness by the modern psychology, she says, "Modern psychology speaks of dual, and treple and multiplex personality, losing sight of the fundamental unity among the confusion of the manifold. Yet truly is our consciousness a Unit, and the variety is due, to the material in which it which it is working".²

States of Consciousness:

Annie Besant explains, according to the Hindun psychology, that there are four states of human consciousness. They are: Waking state (Jagrat), Dream state (Svapna), Deep Sleep state (Sushupti) and the Transcendental state (Turiya). Since consciousness is indeed awareness, so these different states denote varying conditions of awareness. No where in modern European psychology do we find such a clear description of the operation of the human mind as is found in the psychology of Annie Besant entitled: "A Study of Consciousness". Where, though borrowed from the Hindu psychology, she

1. Ibid. p.105.

2. Ibid. p.106.

deals with the four states of human consciousness. It must be borne in mind that these states are not separate from each other, rather they together constitute the whole life of a man. Only for the sake of clear understanding they have been separated from each other.

(1) Waking State of Consciousness (Jagrat):

The waking state of consciousness is a consciousness working on the mental plane using mind as its vehicle, seated in the physical brain as self-consciousness, and using that brain with its connected nervous system as its instrument for willing, knowing and acting in life. In waking state of consciousness "the brain is always active, always vibrating; its activity may be stimulated as a transmitting organ from outside through the senses, or it may be stimulated by the consciousness from the inner planes".¹ In this state brain is ceaselessly active and responds to the without and the within behaviour of a man.

For the development of the working state of consciousness a discriminating mind is needed. The discriminating mind is a wakeful mind. But discrimination is possible only in a state of complete freedom where one can perceive all the alternatives and so can choose from them. Thus a mind that is committed to beliefs, ideals, principles is not a free mind and is not, therefore, a discriminating mind.

1. Ibid. p.169.

The characteristics of the waking state of consciousness (Jagrat) are: (i) a perception of alternatives, and (ii) a putting aside of the non-essential, from among those alternatives. Both these processes are relative to the individual, for one person may see a large number of alternatives, while another may see only a few. The important point to note here is that each man should see for himself what the alternatives are and put aside those which he considers non-essential in terms of his own experience. In Hindu Psychology the awakened man (Jagrat) is one who has great consciousness; he is a man of awareness; conscious about the external world. But to him only awareness is not adequate, he must have, awareness coupled with the element of choice. Then the waking state becomes complete.

(ii) Dream State of Consciousness (Svapna):

Western psychologists tell us that in dream there is to be seen a display of unfulfilled desires. But these psychologists talk of the superficial layer of dreams where the physical brain is passive and where the mind is only active¹. Therefore to these psychologists the dream is that condition where unworkable actions have been put aside, but not necessarily the unfruitful motives. In such dream conditions there is an awareness without any choice.

But in the dream stage, as explained by the Hindu psychology, there is a deeper layer of choiceless awareness.

1. Ibid. p.106-107-

It arises only when the mind in its waking state has put away not only the unworkable way of action but also the unfruitful pursuing of motives.

Annie Besant calls the state of dream consciousness by the name of the "Super-physical consciousness", because the dream is the most generally recognized a universal form of other consciousness. While explaining her point Annie Besant says, "In the East, this state of other consciousness has for long ages been regarded as higher than the waking state, as that of the consciousness set free from the narrow limits of the physical brain, and acting in a subtler and more plastic and congenial medium. Dream has been regarded as one phase of this super-physical activity, and has a touch with the higher world; and means have been taken to arouse self-consciousness in the dream-world, to set self-consciousness free from the physical body at will, so that instead of the vague and confused answers to impacts from higher worlds in undeveloped dream states, self-consciousness may be established therein with clear and definite vision".¹

So in the dream state we find the procession of events moving up and down without any desire to interfere with the self-consciousness of an individual -- thus this condition is that of choiceless awareness.

1. Ibid. p.174.

(111) Deep Sleep Consciousness (Sushupti):

The third state of consciousness, as described by the Hindu Psychology is Deep Sleep. Annie Besant says "The consciousness of deep sleep or trance induced by raja-yoga practice, unaware of the physical and emotional worlds but aware of and contacting the mental world, is Sushupti or deep-sleep consciousness".¹

Deep sleep does not mean a state of oblivion, nor is it a condition of stupor. It arises only when the mind is in a condition of choiceless awareness. Deep sleep is only possible when there is no interference even of the dreams. In dreams the mind watches the movement of thought and these movements bring no interference because with interference dream state comes to an end and man is brought again to the waking condition.

Thus in the condition of deep sleep mind is completely silent. In other words we can say that in the condition mind has reached a state of Mindlessness or silence of the mind. But can the mind be silenced with a conscious effort? Obviously this cannot be done, for any conscious effort to silence the mind keeps the mind caught up in a thought-process. It is a common experience that any conscious effort to sleep drives the sleep away. Silence comes to the mind; it cannot be sought after. So the sensitivity of deep silence comes only when the conscious effort of the mind has ceased. Sushupti is indeed a realm of the deep consciousness, where alone the Voice of the Silence can be heard.

1. Annie Besant: "Man's Life in Three Worlds", p.14.

(iv) Transcendental State (Turiya):

It is the fourth state of consciousness. It is not easy to describe Turiya as it is a condition of Transcendental Experience. Every description of that experience will be an effort on our part to make it immanent. But transcendence cannot be caught in immanence. Thus the Transcendental Reality has always been described by negation.

The state of Turiya is the state of direct, immediate experience which can never be communicated except through similes, comparisons, contrasts which form symbols and help in the presentation of the direct experience of a man. But a symbol is merely an approximation of a substance and not the substance itself. Symbol only indicates the path. Thus for contacting the substance or a reality the symbol has to be given up.

In the silence of the deep state (Sushupti) where the duality of the observer and the observed has vanished, there arises this state of direct experience which is Turiya. It may be noted that all direct experience comes to man in only in silence. Where there is even the slightest noise, there the element of effort is invariably present and the experience cannot be direct and immediate.

Since Turiya state of consciousness can only be described in the language of communication, so it can be known as "Awareness in Action", because no other language can explain Turiya state so it can only be known through the

patterns of behaviour of an individual himself. As Turiya is 'Awareness' in Action' which means actions expressed and explained for providing a clear understanding of transcendental state of consciousness.

The Mechanism of Consciousness:

In the psychology of Annie Besant, it is correct to say that the human body through willing, thinking and acting forms the mechanism of consciousness but she suggests that the nervous apparatus of the body must be called the special mechanism because it is that important apparatus which controls and directs the whole consciousness. Annie Besant writes "Every cell in the body is composed of myriads of tiny lives, each with its own germinal consciousness, each cell has its own dawning consciousness, each cell has its own dawning consciousness, controlling and organizing these; but the central ruling consciousness which uses the whole body controls and organizes it in turn, and the mechanism in which it functions for this purpose is the nervous"¹ system.

In explaining the process of consciousness Annie Besant seems to be influenced mostly by the Hindu psychology.

(B) Character:

Annie Besant's lecture entitled "The Building of Character" gives her views in detail about character. In this lecture she talks about the building up, not the character

1. Op.Cit., 'A Study of Consciousness', p.119.

of any common human being but, of the character of a divine being. As this topic very closely concerns the character of a common human being, so it would be very interesting to know it in brief.

To Annie Besant there is a necessity of building some positive virtues in a man if he wants to attain a noble character. She suggests that the desired positive virtues must be of "an exceedingly high and noble type; virtues which are not those simply that are recognized as necessary in the world, but far rather those which the aspirant desires to achieve in order that he may become one of the Helpers and the Saviours of the world, those characteristics that go to make up one of the world's Redeemers, one of the pioneers of the first-fruits of mankind".¹

According to Annie Besant there are many essential principles which must be followed for the building up of a character. These are given as under:-

(1) Deliberate Building: The first thing in the building of character is its exceedingly deliberate nature. Annie Besant writes "It is not a thing of fits and starts, it is not a casual building and leaving off, it is not an effort in this direction one day and in another direction tomorrow, it is not running about seeking for aims, it is not a turning about looking for a purpose; the whole of this at least is definitely done, the purpose is recognized and the aim is

1. Annie Besant: "Creating Character", p.5.

known".¹

The deliberate building begins with the character as it is recognized to exist having a definite aim in view. So every individual has a definiteness of purpose which leads to deliberateness of action for achieving a right character.

(ii) Choice of Right Thoughts: Annie Besant attaches great importance to choosing right thoughts in the building of character. In her views a man must learn the way to control his thoughts because right thinking and control of thoughts affect others, so in the selection of thoughts one must be vigilant to select those thoughts to which he will be able to bend his energy and calculate the actions of those thoughts on the others. But he must not see only the effect of his thoughts on others but he must also see how those thoughts affect himself because thoughts are the driving force which help in the formation of a character.

(iii) Path of Truth: For building up a highy character a path of truth is badly required to be followed. Truth does not mean, not to speak a lie. To Annie Besant Truth is a very comprehensive term. To her "Truth is the very basis of intellectual character, as love is of moral character".² Annie Besant insists that every man should be definitely true "scrupulously and accurately true, not with the

1. Ibid.

2. Annie Besant: "Theosophy". pp.46-47.

common place truthfulness of the world, though that be not a thing to be despised, but of that scrupulous and strict truthfulness which is necessary above all to the student"¹ of life.

Annie Besant recommends some kinds of truth to be followed by every sincere man: truth of observation, truth of recording, truth of thinking, truth of speaking, truth of acting. Annie Besant forcefully suggests that where there is not this seeking after truth and a strenuous determination to become true, there is no possibility of building a high character of a man.

When these three, above referred principles are realized and the initial points of character building are understood, an Ideal is formed in a man. The mind working within itself builds an internal image which is made more established as the mind grows in strength. Annie Besant gives a great importance to the ideal of character building, she quotes the Chandogya Upanishad, where it is written "Man is a creature of reflection; what he reflects upon, that he becomes; therefore; therefore reflect upon Brahman"². For the mind of a man is a mirror and images are cast upon it and are reflected, and the Soul that in the mirror of the mind beholds the glory of the Lord is changed into that same image from glory to glory. So in the first instance a man must have the ideal

1. Op.cit. "Creating Character", p.11.

2. Ibid. p.18.

before him in order that he may reflect it.

Annie Besant is a practical psychologist, she does not explain only the ideals of a good character but also tells the methods by which that ideal can be achieved successfully.

Annie Besant gives some workable methods in the achievement of higher ideals of character formation.

(1) Contemplation: By contemplating with a definite purpose, choosing time and not allowing himself to be shaken from it, a man can get the ideal that he has built for him. For perfect contemplation the training in concentration is essential, because for right contemplation mind is not to be scattered. Writing in support of concentration Annie Besant says, "We have to learn to fix it steadily, and this is a thing that we should be working at continually, working at in all the common things of life, doing one thing at a time until the mind answers obediently to the impulse, and doing it with the concentrated energy which bends the whole mind towards a single point".¹

Annie Besant is not very rigid in her methods of building up of character, she even ungrudgingly recommends that if any one finds that he has chosen badly or wrongly, he must change gladly the procedure or practice, she says, "be ready to change what does not work well; but change it

1. Ibid. p.20.

at your own time and with perfect deliberation; do not change it because on the impulse of the moment, passion or bodily desire or emotion may be ruling; do not change it at the demand of the lower nature that has to be disciplined, but change it if you find that you have badly chosen".¹

The next stage, before Annie Besant, in which character is to be builded, is the study of character itself. She takes the ideas of the great men as an example for her ideals. As a lover of Bhagavad Gita she tries to get lesson about the virtues needed for the character of a man from Lord Krishna's saying.

In Bhagavad Gita, in the sixteenth discourse, Sri Krishana gives a list of qualities, everyone of which might serve as a part of one's constant thought and endeavour, remembering that the character is built first by the contemplation of the virtues, and then by the working out of that virtue which has become part of the thought into the speech and the action in daily life. The list of virtues which can very effectively cement one's character are: "Fearlessness, Purity of Heart, Stead-fastness in the Yoga of Wisdom, Almsgiving, Self-restraint and Sacrifice, the Study of the Sastras, Austerity and Straightforwardness Harmlessness, Truth, Absence of Wrath, Renunciation, Peacefulness, Absence of Calumny, Compassion to Living Beings, Uncovetousness, Mildness, Modesty, Absence of Fickleness, Boldness, Forgiveness, Fortitude, Uprightness, Amity, Absence of Pride -- these become his who is born with the

1. Ibid. p.23.

divine qualities".¹

The virtues explained above, taken from the Bhagavad Gita, are very important to help in the building of character. Annie Besant suggests that each of these virtues must be practised in daily life by the children. In the institutions which were established by Annie Besant in India, she laid a great emphasis to the building up of the character of the students, based primarily on the virtues referred to, from the Bhagavad Gita.

In her educational institutions Annie Besant incessantly advised the students to imbibe these virtues in their daily lives. Her constant preaching to the student was to practice, practice, practice these virtues "not by hardening yourself but by making yourself responsive"² to these ideals so that a high character of each one may be built.

(C) E m o t i o n

To Annie Besant, Emotion is not a primary state of consciousness, but it is a compound made up by the inter-

1. Annie Besant & Bhagwan Dass (translators) 'The Bhagavad Gita', pp.271-72. In the opening three couplets Lord Krishana says:

2. Ibid. p.28.

action of two of the aspects of the Self- Desire and Intellect. She writes that "The play of Intellect on Desire gives birth to Emotion; it is the child of both, and shows some of the characteristics of its father, Intellect, as well as of its mother, Desire".¹

Annie Besant considers emotion as a great motive force in man as it stimulates all thoughts and impels them to action. Without emotions the life of a man will become passive and inert. But emotions also subjugate some persons who are continually harassed by their own mental conflicts. Annie Besant suggests that if good results are desired right reason must always govern and direct emotions. She writes "Emotion should be the impulse to action, but not its director; direction belongs to the intelligence, and its guiding prerogative should never be wrenched away from it. Where the consciousness thus works, having strong emotion as the impulse and right reason as director, there is the sympathetic and wise man who is useful to his generation".²

Annie Besant warns that man must not be a slave to the desires, because desires as are rooted deep in emotions, when become limitless direct emotions to wrong channels. The activities must thus be the result of intelligence and emotions and not purely that of unintelligent desires.

1. Op-cit. 'A Study of Consciousness', p.267.

2. Ibid. p.297.

She writes "Emotion gives the movement, intelligence controls and guides, and then the Self will use activity to the best advantage, as becomes the ruler of the emotions, not their victim".¹

When Annie Besant finds emotion to be a motive force to action, she also finds a distorting wrong desires caused by alluring sense-perception. Annie Besant finds it very difficult to master perfectly one's emotions, but she suggests some methods of practical utility for obtaining a control over the emotions.

Annie Besant recommends the following forceful methods for achieving a mastery of the emotions:

1. Meditation: Annie Besant attaches a great importance to meditation. She is confident that by meditation disturbed emotions can find peace. She suggests that for effective results the best time for meditation is the morning time, just after a peaceful sleep of whole night, when the desire body or the emotional nature is more tranquil than after it has plunged into the hustle and bustle of the days's work. She records the efficaciousness of the morning time meditation when she writes: "From that peaceful morning hour will stream out the influence which will guard during the day, and the emotions, soothed and stilled, will be more amenable to control".²

1. Ibid. p.298.

2. Ibid. p.302-303.

2. Careful consideration before Speech: Second method, recommended by Annie Besant, for curbing the emotions is to think over what is going to be said before speaking. She writes that "the person who never speaks a sharp or ill-considered word is well on the way to control emotion. To rule speech is to rule the whole nature. It is a good plan to speak.....until one is clear as to what one is going to say, is sure that the speech is true, that it is adapted to the person to whom it is to be addressed, and that it is such as ought to be spoken".¹

3. Refusal to yield to Impulse: Another method of mastering emotion is by refraining from acting on impulse. Annie Besant criticizes the present age because to hurry to act is characteristic of the modern age and people in line with modern times consider the excess of the promptitude as a virtue. Annie Besant writes "When we consider life calmly we realize that there is never any need for hurry; there is time enough, and action, however swift, should be well considered and unhurried. When an impulse comes from strong emotion and we spring forward in obedience without consideration, we act unwisely. If we train ourselves to think before we act in all ordinary affairs, then which prompt action is necessary, the swift mind will balance up the demands of the moment and direct swift action, but there will

1. Ibid. p.304.

no hurry, no inconsiderate, unwise blundering".¹

In Annie Besant's psychology the above explained three methods are very useful for every student of educational psychology to turn his emotions into useful servants instead of making them dangerous masters. Annie Besant herself employed these methods profitably in the educational institutions which were established by her in India.

(D) W i l l

Annie Besant means by the Will, the Will of the Self, of the individualized Self which draws a man into manifestation. The great Will, of which a man's will is a part draws him towards manifestations, it draws not by any compulsion or by external necessity or by anything opposed to him from outside but only to exercise power to make movement and to enveil life in matter.

Though the Will is essentially and fundamentally free in its origin, being the Power of the Self, becomes bound and limited in its attempts to master the matter in which the Self has entered. It is idle to speak of a free will in a man because he is the slave of the objects around him. Annie Besant writes about the man that "He is ever in bondage, he can exercise no choice; for though

1. Ibid. p.307

we may think of such a one as choosing to follow the path along which attractions draw him, there is in truth no choice nor thought of choice. So long as attractions and repulsions determine, the path, all talk of freedom is empty and foolish. Even though a man feels himself as choosing the desirable object; the feeling of freedom is illusory, for he is dragged by the attractiveness of the object and the longing for pleasure in himself. He is as much, or as little, free as the iron is free to move to the magnet. The movement is determined by the strength of the magnet and the nature of the iron answering to its attractions".¹

While explaining the freedom of the Will Annie Besant tries to solve the riddle of life that 'whether we are free to choose or not?' She says that "The question is not: 'Am I free to Act?' but: "Am I free to Will?' And we see clearly... that the will is determined by the strongest motive as the basis of all organized society, of all law, of all penalty, of all responsibility, of all education. The man whose will is not thus determined is irresponsible, insane....who cannot be appealed to, cannot be reasoned with, cannot be relied on, a person without reason, logic, or memory, without the attributes we regard as human.....A Will which is an energy pointing in any direction, pushing to action without motive, without reason, without sense, might perhaps be called "free",

1. Ibid. p.321.

but this is not what is meant by "freedom of the will".¹

In Annie Besant's system a common man's will is considered to be a little will and that of the God's, a great will. The little will works constantly within the great will. The little will is always determined by motive conditioned by the limits of the matter that enveils the separate Self. Annie Besant explains the freedom of the will by saying that "freedom is to be determined from within, bondage is to be determined from without; the Will is free, when the Self, willing to act, draws his motive for that volition from sources that lie within himself, and has not the motive acting upon him from sources outside".²

Thus man finds freedom because the greater Self, in which he moves is one with him, and the vaster Self in which moves that greater Self is one with that vaster, and so on and on, in huger and huger sweeps, the Self goes higher with the Inner Self, the Brahman, and therefore man finds himself truly free. Looking outwards man seems to be bound, though the limits of his bondage recede endlessly; looking inwards he seems to be free, for he is a part of Brahman, the Eternal. Annie Besant does not feel shy to give the real truth when she says "To all intents and purposes the Will of us is not free. It is only in process of becoming free, and it will only be free when the Self has utterly mastered his vehicles

1. Ibid. p.323.

2. Ibid. p.327.

and uses them for his own purposes.....completely responsive to his every impulse, and not a struggling animal, ill-broken, with desires of its own. When the Self has transcended ignorance, vanquishing the habits that are the marks of past ignorance, then is the Self free"¹ Then can be realized the meaning of the freedom of will.

The Power of the Will: The power of the Will, which has been recognized in Occult science as the spiritual energy in man, is being graped after also in this world, and being unconsciously used as a means for bringing about unattainable results.

The Power of the Will is being used now by the medical sciences in treating patients suffering from nervous and mental ailments. With the Power of the Will purification of thoughts and desires is done. Will-cure brings purity to the mind, which causes the health to the body. To Annie Besant "Purity and health truly go together".²

But Annie Besant does not favour too much use of the will-power in the service of body. She regards it to be an inferior act to put the body to a high pinnacle and thus lose the occult power given by God to a man. She writes: "By using the Will to serve the body, we make the Will its slave, and the practice of continually removing little aches

1. Ibid. p.328.

2. Ibid. p.339.

and pains by willing them to go saps the higher quality of endurance. A person thus acting is apt to be irritable under small physical discomforts which the Will cannot remove, and the higher power of the will which cannot control the body and support it its work, even though it be suffering, is undermined. Hesitancy to use the power of the Will for relief of one's body need not arise from any doubt as to the soundness of the thought, the reality of the law, on which such action is based; but from a fear that men may fall under the temptation of using that which should lift them to realms spiritual as the minister of the physical, and may thus become slaves of the body, and be helpless when the body fails them in the hour of need".¹

The Goal of the Will: The goal of life is to form a union of the separate Will, of a man, with the one higher will of Brahman, for helping the evolution of man. Annie Besant insists upon that a man should not live separately from others but one with them, and he must "realize that the sufferings and the striving are the more efficacious as we suffer only in the sufferings of others and feel not suffering for ourselves, we shall rise into the Divine"² and thus attain a union with the Divine will.

In the interpretation of the term 'Will' we find that Annie Besant handles it philosophically and not psychologically.

1. Ibid. pp.340-41.

2. Ibid. p.345.

(E) D e s i r e

To Annie Besant, Desire shows the energy and the impelling characteristic of will, but matter has wrenched away its control and direction from the Spirit and has usurped domination over it. Desire is a discrowned will and is slave of matter. It is not self-determined but is determined by the attractions around it.

Annie Besant states that will and Desire are same by their innermost nature because they are due to one determination, the one motor-power of man, that which impels man for activity. When the self determines the activity, uninfluenced by attractions or repulsions towards surrounding objects, when Will is manifested. When outer attractions and repulsions determine the activity and the man is drawn forcedly by these, deaf to the voice of the Self, then Desire is seen.

The Awakening of Desire: The awakening of Desire takes place in this body of sensations and follows the first dim sensings of pleasure and pain. To explain the awakening of Desire Annie Besant says "Pleasure is a sense of "moreness" of increased expanded life, while pain is a shutting in or lessening of life".¹ As the states of pleasure and pain become more definitely established in consciousness, they give rise to continuation of the attractions and repulsions

1. Ibid. p.241.

in consciousness. With the fading away of pleasure there is a continuation of the attraction in consciousness and this becomes a dim groping after the feeling of pleasure, similarly with the fading away of pain, there is a continuation of the repulsion in consciousness. These stages give birth to Desire.

The attraction and repulsion are equally of the nature of Desire. Annie Besant writes: "Both attraction and repulsion are Desire, and these are the two great motor-energies in life, into which all desires are ultimately resolvable. The Self comes under the bondage of Desire, of Attraction-Repulsion, and is attracted hither and thither, repelled from this or that, hurried about among pleasure and pain-giving objects".¹

The Relation of Desire and Thought: When a pleasure has been experienced and passed away, Desire arises to experience it again. This fact implies memory, which is the function of the mind. Repetition of the same perception establishes a definite link in memory between the object and the pleasurable or painful sensation, and when Desire passes for the repetition of pleasure, the mind recalls the object which supplied the pleasure. Thus the mingling of Thought with Desire gives birth to a particular desire to find out the pleasure giving or pain giving object.

1. Ibid. p.243.

Thus desires impel the mind to exert their inherent activities. Annie Besant writes: "Discomfort being caused by the unsatisfied craving, effort is made to escape the discomfort by supplying the object wanted. The mind plans, schemes, drives the body into action, in order to satisfy the cravings of Desire. And similarly, equally prompted by Desire, the mind plans, schemes, drives the body into action in order to avoid the recurrence of pain from an object recognized as pain-giving".¹

This gives the relation of Desire to thought. In earlier stages the mind is the slave of Desire and it grows rapidly in proportion to the fierce urgings of Desire. When ever we desire we are compelled to think.

Desire, Thought & Action: In Annie Besant's Psychology there is a very close relationship between Desire, Thought and Action. The mind having perceived the object of desire leads to action. Action is often said to arise from Desire, but Desire only cannot arouse any movement or action. The force of Desire is propulsive and not directive. Thought adds the elements of direction in it and makes the action purposive. Annie Besant writes: "This is the ever-recurring cycle in consciousness -- Desire, Thought, Action. The propulsive power of Desire arouses Thought; the directive power of Thought guides Action. This sequence is invariable....

1. Ibid. pp.245-46.

The shaping of Karma can only be achieved when this sequence is understood, for evitable and inevitable action can only thus be discriminated".¹

In Annie Besant's system of psychology, it is by thought and Desire can be changed and thereby action can also be changed. When the creativity activity of Thought can be exerted in the moulding of Desire and its propulsive energy can be turned into a better direction, in this way Thought can be used to Master Desire and it may become the ruler instead of the slave and "thus assert control over its unruly companion, it begins the transmutation of Desire into Will, changing the governance of the outgoing energy from the outer to the inner, from the external objects that attract or repel to the Spirit, the inner Ruler."²

The Purification of Desire: Annie Besant recommends two methods for the purification of Desire. These methods are explained as under:-

1. Encouragement of Good Desires: It is very essential to encourage good desires in the people. Evil desires die away when good desires are fostered and when evil desires do not find any nourishment. The effort to reject all wrong desires is accompanied by the firm refusal of thought to allow them to pass on into actions. Annie Besant writes: "Will begins to restrain action, even when Desire clamours

1. Ibid. pp.246-47.

2. Ibid. p.247.

for gratification. And this refusal to permit the action instigated by wrong desire gradually deprives of all attractive power the objects which erstwhile aroused it.....The desires fade away, starved by lack of satisfaction. Abstinence from gratification is a potent means of purification".¹

2. Utilization of the Repulsive Force of Desire: The second method of purification recommended by Annie Besant is to utilize the repulsive force. Sometimes a man finds it impossible to get rid of the evil desires and in spite of all his efforts his mind yields to their strong impulse and evil imagination riot in his brain. He may conquer by apparent yielding, carrying on the evil imaginations to their inevitable results. He faces in thought the other side of the evils and sees the soil and distortion of his own vices pictured in the suffering and the agony of the craving of desires that may no longer be fulfilled. Resolutely he forces his shrinking thoughts to dwell on his miserable panorama of the triumph of wrong desires, until there rises within him a strong repulsion against them, an intolerable fear and loathing of the result of his present yielding.

Annie Besant discourages this method of purification. To her this "method of purification is like the surgeon's knife, cutting out a cancer which menaces the life, and, like all surgical operations, is to be avoided unless no other

1. Ibid. pp.265-66.

means of cure remain. It is better to conquer wrong desire by the attractive force of an ideal than by the repulse force of a spectacle of ruin. But where attraction fails to conquer, repulsion may perhaps prevail".¹

By higher attraction, by repulsion, or by the slow teaching of suffering, Annie Besant aims only to purify the Desire of a man.

(F) T h o u g h t - P o w e r

According to Annie Besant thought has a great power for a man. Every religion speaks very high about thought-power as it influences a man's character, his moral nature and his future life. One of the most ancient of the Indian Scriptures declares: "Man is created by thought; what a man thinks upon that he becomes; therefore think on the Eternal"² Lord Buddha said "All that we are is made up of our thoughts"³ and similar has been said by all religions. So thought has been taken as the parent of action and our nature sets itself to embody that which is generated by thought. Thought has boundless power to shape and mould the human character.

Annie Besant, in order to support her thesis in favour of thought-power, tells how a large number of patients suffering from Atrophy of the nerves were treated by mesmerism, only by utilising thought for the cure. She writes: "I have known

1. Ibid. p.267.

2. Annie Besant: "Australian Lectures (1908)", p.80.

3. Annie Besant: "The Riddle of Life", p.58.

two cases of blindness, caused by the beginning of Atrophy of the optic nerve cured by thought, after they had unhesitatingly been declared incurable by the doctors to whom the patients had gone. Now diseases of the nerves are about the easiest things to cure where you utilize thought, because you are dealing with part of the mechanism of thought, and nerve answers more readily to thought than the structures and tissues which are not ordinarily worked on by thought in the same way".¹

But Annie Besant does not favour the view of utilizing thought in curing ordinary pains and aches because thought has for more noble uses than curing patients. She thinks that by healing some physical disease or physical injury by thoughts is to make human body for too sensitive to these things. Instead of utilizing thought as our servant, it becomes our master.

This being a practically general appreciation of the power of thought in the system of Annie Besant, it becomes important now to know how Annie Besant wants to use this great power in the highest possible way to the greatest possible effect. She likes to use it in two ways.

1. The Practice of Meditation: To Annie Besant meditation is a concentrated thought with a power of love behind it.

1. Annie Besant: "The Power of Thought" the lecture given in the book 'Australian Lectures', p.98.

She recommends that regularly every morning, before going out into the world, every one should sit down for from three to five minutes and think about any virtue which one wants to imbibe in him. To Annie Besant thoughts are of great importance, she writes: "Thought is dual in its nature: on one side a change of consciousness, on the other side a corresponding vibration in matter. There is no change of consciousness without a vibration in matter, however fine, there is no vibration in matter without a change of consciousness. If you have the change of consciousness that you call prayer, which is concentrated by the earnestness of the suppliant, you get a correspondingly powerful vibration in the matter of the finer, subtler worlds, and this can produce physical effects, just in the same way as the invisible wind.....tosses up the denser water into waves or ripples. Finer forces can work on the grosser matter through the gradations downward from the matter which first they had set moving; and there is nothing unscientific or unreasonable in the idea that by the thought force of prayer you can bring about physical results".¹

2. Helping a good cause by sending to it good thoughts:

To Annie Besant thoughts are very powerful vehicles of evil or goodness. She thinks that everyone must send good thoughts towards others because right thoughts are continual

1. Ibid. pp.132-33.

benedictions which each one must radiate. She writes: "Wrong thought is as swift for evil as is right thought for good. Thought can wound as well as heal, distress as well as comfort. Ill thoughts thrown into the mental atmosphere poison receptive minds; thoughts of anger and revenge lend strength to the murderous blow; thoughts which wrong others barb the tongue of slander, wing the arrows loosed at the unjustly assailed. The mind tenanted by evil thoughts acts as a magnet to attract like thoughts from others, and thus intensifies the original ill".¹ So in place of ill thoughts man must have good thoughts for others.

Annie Besant advises people that they should understand the power of thought in detail. In her lecture she says: "The whole world, the whole Universe, is only a thought of God, and you will grow into God's image and His powers will be reproduced in miniature in yourselves. You can build yourselves as He builds His worlds by that creative thought, the power of the imagination and the power of the will. These are the divine powers in every one of you, though more developed in one than in the other. And as you progress in the power of thought and build yourselves by that power your character shall grow nobler, your lives more beautiful, your power to help stronger and stronger, until in time you

1. Annie Besant: "Thought Power and Its Use" this essay given in the book 'The Riddle of Life', p.60.

shall awaken to know that you have built yourself into a world's helper, and that the power of thought in you has grown into the power to save".¹

Annie Besant has interpreted many other terms of psychology in her writings and lectures but her purpose to explain those terms is mainly to couple theosophy with psychological knowledge. She has, in a similar way, explained many ethical, moral, metaphysical, scientific and artistic concepts and terms with a chief purpose of making Theosophy a complete scientific knowledge and present it, before the world, as a perfect philosophy covering all the fields of knowledge.

We find that while explaining psychological terms, Annie Besant does not present them in purely an academic manner as a pure science. She handles psychological knowledge in such a way that it may plead the case in favour of Theosophy.

Annie Besant is a keen student of psychology and has an up-to-date knowledge of psychology of her times. She studied this branch of knowledge as a special paper when she prepared for her Teachers' Training degree in London University. The knowledge of psychology, and especially that of educational psychology, made her thoroughly competent

1. Op.cit. 'Australian Lectures', pp.108-109.

to establish an array of educational institutions throughout India where she managed the education of the children according to the latest educational principles. But it must not be forgotten that the institutions established by her have a deep imprint of Theosophy over them because these were managed by a board of trustee whose all the members were closely attached to the Theosophical Society.

CHAPTER - V

ANNIE BESANT'S CONCEPT OF "THE
INDIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION OF
THE VAIDIC PERIOD".

This chapter has been devoted to a survey of Annie Besant's views about the Indian system of Education during the Vaidic period and other allied facets of it.

It would be interesting to note that Annie Besant's educational writings constitute a voluminous literature but she did not write any single work systematically developing any particular thesis on education like an academician in the nature of Spender's 'Education' or Montessori's 'Methods'. Annie Besant's books on education, chiefly lectures, touch all aspects of education cursorily and so her direct and indirect utterances have been collected to bring them together to form a proper answer to the problem in hand.

Annie Besant had a firm belief that the Vaidic India of the ancient times has a priceless legacy. She studied thoroughly the philosophy and the Wisdom of India with reverence. She revived the memories of the glories of past of India, to which even many Indians were ignorant. She lectured incessantly on the Gita, on the Upanishads, on the hidden system of the Puranas; she educated the scoffing youth of India to

reverence the Rishies of the vaidic age. She awakened the Indian heritage in order to educate them on the educational system working in the Vaidic times. She tried her best to revive the ancient Indian ideals of education of the Vaidic times by founding the Central Hindu College, Benares and a large number of schools and colleges in other parts of India where she made her efforts to create Vaidic environment through her lectures about Mahabharata, Ramayana, Great Rishies and hermits of Vaidic times and gave students the glimpses of that age when India was really a highly developed country having a wonderful well-planned system of education.

Though Annie Besant was modern of the moderns but in matter of education of the Indians she did not like to break her ties with the past. While speaking in a lecture Annie Besant implored upon that the question of 'education must be taken up, designed and carried out, by those who are not only the lovers of their country but who are also men who understand its needs' and as well as aware of its peculiarities, of its characteristics, and of its traditions. To be truly useful Education must be founded on a knowledge of the past of country.....it must be designed in accordance with the ancient traditions".¹

Annie Besant lived in modern times but she did not wish to belong to the modern India, she always talked and

1. Annie Besant: "Education as a National Duty", p.1.

revered the bygone days. While reviving the memory of India's past Annie Besant says "the India to which I belong in faith and heart is.....a civilization in which spiritual knowledge was accounted highest title to honour, and in which the people revered and sought after spiritual truth..... The India I would give my life to help in building is an India learned in the ancient philosophy, pulsing with the ancient religion.....intellectually noble and spiritually sublime".¹

Annie Besant had a great admiration for the Vaidic system of education when learning was regarded as "greater than wealth and rank, the fillet of wisdom as more worthy of reverence than the jewelled diadem of kings".² She revered those old Vaidic institutions of knowledge which were born on the Indian soil, breathing in Indian air and nourished by Indian traditions. In those institutions the true ideals of education were fully known.

In the Vaidic period the system of education constituted of the forest schools which were known Ashramas.

Describing the education of the Ashramas Rabindra Nath Tagore writes: A most wonderful thing that we notice in Ancient India is, that here the forest not the town, is the fountain-head of all its civilization.....There trees and plants, rivers and lakes, had ample opportunity to live in close relationship with men.

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1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, dated 22nd March, 1894, Annie Besant contributed an important article to this paper about her future policy in India.
 2. Annie Besant: "Higher Education in India: Past & Present", p.2.

"In these forests, though there was human society, there was enough of open space, of aloofness; there was no jostling. Still, this aloofness did not produce inertness in the Indian mind; rather it rendered it all the brighter. It is the forest that has nurtured the two great Ancient Ages of India, the Vaidic and the Buddhistic.....The current of civilization that flowed from its forests undated the whole of India".¹

The Vaidic system of education was self-controlled and while the state profited by it and from it drew its dignity, religion, morality, effectiveness and efficiency, government exercised over it no control and did not interfere with its management. Kings built universities and other institutions of learning and bestowed on them wealth, but claimed in them no authority. Annie Besant mentioning the highest honour given to the learned teacher by the people writes "A Monarch might enter into the Convocation of a University, but no one rose to greet him and he took his seat like any other visitor; but on the entrance of its Head, the "Venerable of Venerables", all rose and turned their faces towards him and in silence awaited his words. The University was the Temple of Learning, and the learned were its only Hierophants. When Learning visited Royalty, when a Wise One entered a Court even Shri Krishna descended from His throne and bowed at the feet

1. The Vishva-Bharati Quarterly, April, 1924, p.64.

of the Sage".¹

In the Vaidic period the education of the child upto the age of seven years seems to have been more in the home than in the school. From seven to fourteen the boy was to be taught and trained in school and then to pass on to the University.

In the Ashramas of the Vaidic period the sages taught the pupils the supreme literature comprised of the Hindu Sacred books; the Epics, the Puranas, the Darshanas, the Yoga Shastras, the Arthashastras and Nitishastras. The supreme literature was so difficult that it could not be understood in its deepest meaning except with the aid of meditation and the discipline of the Raja Yoga. In the early Vaidic period the use of the art of writing was tabooed for a long time for the preservation of sacred literature. The knowledge "continued to live only in the memory of scholars for several centuries. Secular literature had not yet come into existence, grammar and arithmetic were yet to be developed.....Primary education in the sense of the knowledge of the 3 R's was thus impossible".²

In the later Vaidic period when the forests were no longer used for establishing Universities, the new universities began to be built in scenes of natural beauty, surrounded by lovely gardens, fragrant with blossoms and shady with

1. Annie Besant: Indian Ideals in Education, Philosophy and Religion, and Art,. pp.8-9.

2. Altekar, A. S.: "Education in Ancient India", pp.172-73.

trees, surrounded by a high wall with guarded gates. The site of an insignificant village may sometimes be selected, because of its beauty. The influence of natural beauty on the development of the mind was considered very potent factor necessary for the education of the pupils.

The number of students attached to an Ashrama sometimes surprises one. As there was no problem of room in the forests, so to limit the number of the students was not a very considerable issue "Kalidasa speaks of Kanva, the sage as Kulapati i.e., a sage who feeds and teaches ten thousand students".¹ In 'Modern Review' of August 1923 Prof. Kulkarni writes: "It would be extremely entertaining to the imagination to try to depict a mental picture of an educational institution that consisted of ten thousand students, all bright, pure, inspiring faces, living together, learning together. Even such a big number in an educational institution was not a novelty in Ancient India".² Later, we note that in some of the great Universities the number of students under one teacher was limited to 500.

The Forest Ashrama had two specialities: one was the huge number of pupils studying under a single sage, the second was the occasionally great length of the student's life, some pupils may remain in a Forest Ashrama till their hair had turned grey. Studious adults would long remain as

1. Op.cit.: 'Higher Education in India', p.17.

2. Kulkarni, R.G: "A University in the Shakuntla", an article in the Modern Review of August, 1923, p.216.

pupils of a much respected Sage, giving their time to meditation and profound philosophical study and also to helping the Guru with the younger pupils.

(A) Objectives and Ideals of Vaidic Education:

In the educational system of Annie Besant there is nothing more necessary than the holding up of certain objectives and ideals before the minds of the youth. She believed that one of the greatest defect in the education of the boys in India is the absence of the presentation of the objectives and ideals and the consequent absence of enthusiasm.¹ Annie Besant has planned some objectives of education for the Indian education, but as these also present her ideas about Vaidic education, so these have been given here. Annie Besant writes:

"What after all is the object of Education?

"To train the body in health, vigour and grace, so that it may express the emotions in beauty, and the mind with accuracy and strength.

"To train the emotions to love all that is noble and beautiful; to sympathize with the joys and sorrows of others; to inspire to service ever widening in its area, until we love our elders as our parents, our equals as our brothers and sisters, our youngers as our children, and seek to serve them all; to find joy in sacrifice for great causes

1. Annie Besant: 'The Young Citizen' Nov. 1913, given in Annie Besant Builder of New India", p.398.

and for the helpless; to feel reverence for all who are worthy of it, and compassion for the outcast and the criminal.

"To evolve and discipline the mind in right thinking, in right discrimination, in right judgement, in right memory.

"To subdue body, emotion and mind to the Spirit, the inner Ruler Immortal, making the mind the mirror of the Ego, the emotions the mirror of the Intuition, the body the expression of the Will.

"To put all this in a single sentence:

To make the man a good citizen of a free and Spiritual Commonwealth of Humanity".¹

Ideals of Education in Vaidic times: In her philosophy Annie Besant attaches great importance to the ideals because ideals always flower into the life of the society. Defining an Ideal, Annie Besant says, that it "is a fixed idea; it is created by the mind; it is nourished by desire; it presses ever outwardly into the world of manifestation seeking to express itself in action".² Every country and every age has its own ideals according to the nature of the Thought which is the generating seed, so is true of the Vaidic education which has some high ideals, which burst into the blossom producing a special educational system of its own.

1. Annie Besant: "India: Bond or Free?", pp. 147-48.

2. Annie Besant: 'The Bearing of Religious Ideals on Social Reconstruction' noted in 'The Birth of New India', p. 202.

In her lectures and writings Annie Besant discussed some ideals of Vaidic education, which were prevalent in that time. Some of the ideals have been collected from her works, which are as follows:-

1. Vaidic education suited to the needs of the time:

Vaidic education had no fixed curriculum. That education had a well planned but flexible curricula which was adjusted according to the current needs of the society and time. With a change in the needs the curricula also changed.

2. Vaidic Ashrams in the forests:

It is worthy of notice that in the Vaidic age forest was the fountain-head of all civilization. Education, rather higher education, could only be received in the forest-Ashrams where sages taught in calm and natural environment. This was the cause that pupils learnt sublime philosophies or artistic masterpieces of very high order.

Annie Besant, writing on the Ideal of Ashram education, says "The essence of that ideal is not the forest as such, but the being in close touch with Nature; to let her harmonies permeate the consciousness, and her calm soothe the restlessness of the mind. Hence it was the forest, which best suited the type and the object of the instruction in the days which evolved kishis; instruction which aimed at profound rather than at swift and alert thought; which cared not for lucid exposition by the teacher, but presented

to the pupil a kernel of truth in a hard shell which he must crack unassisted with his own strong teeth if he would enjoy the kernel; if he could not break the shell, he could go without the fruit: instruction which thought less of an accumulation of facts poured out into the pupil's memory than of the drawing out in him the faculty which could discover a truth, hidden beneath a mass of irrelevancies; of such fruitful study the Hindu Ashrama in the forest is the symbol".¹

In the later Vaidic period the open-air forest universities gave place to buildings having scenic beauty and shady trees around them.

3. Observance of Brahmacharya: During Vaidic period the rule of Manu for the student was strictly observed: simple dress, plain food, hard bed and the vow of the Brahmachari. There were no exceptions: Prince, noble or a common student, all were treated alike. Annie Besant writes "A boy was given into the hands of the teacher, or Guru when he was of five or seven years old, or sometimes later. From that day forward he lived in his teacher's house, serving him and studying under him, the period of study being nine, eighteen or thirty-six years, or until he had mastered his studies, and sometimes even lasting throughout the life..... During the whole of this period the student was under the obligation of

1. Op.cit.: 'Indian Ideals in Education', pp.26-27.

absolute chastity".¹ Under the vow of virginity and until the student period was over, he was not permitted to enter the house-hold life.

4. Religion as the integral part of Vaidic education: In Vaidic times religion was the core of education. It was not only taught by the sages to the pupils, but both of them lived religion as a way of life. Annie Besant gives a very important place to religion in the education of the child. To her religion is the foundation of education because "First, Religion is necessary as the basis for Morality; Secondly, Religion is necessary as the foundation of original literature".² As an ideal of Vaidic education, religion held a supreme position. From early morning till night all the activities of the students and the teachers were performed religiously accordingly to the approved rules of the sacred books.

5. Caste based on Vocation: In the Vaidic age caste and Vocation were synonyms. With the change in Caste the vocation also changed and with a change in vocation caste was got to change. Annie Besant considers that as society in the Vaidic "Ideal was a community of rational beings, not a fortuitous concourse of atoms, it was regarded as an organism, a body politic with definite organs, each discharging a definite function, for the benefit and health of the whole community. This system was called Caste, and it was necessarily built up

1. Annie Besant: "Brahmacharya", an article published in the Central Hindu College Magazine, 1901 and collected in 'The Birth of New India', p.396.

2. Annie Besant: 'The Necessity of Religious Education' in The Birth of New India, p.117.

by Caste Education".¹

Shri Krishna said in Bhagavad Gita "The four Castes were emanated by Me, by the different distribution of qualities and actions; know Me to be the author of them, though the actionless and inexhaustible"². Annie Besant takes Lord Krishna's utterances as true "essence of Caste; the Utilisation of physical heredity to provide bodies suitable for the manifestation of the qualities was an advantage, but unessential, and could only be secured by the co-operation of Devas with men, the men following the Dharma laid down for each Caste and thus preserving a sub-type of physical body, to which the Devas guided the appropriate egos, i.e., the egos who had evolved the given "distribution of qualities". The group of qualities was that which fitted the ego to discharge one of the functions of one of the fundamental organs of the body politic: Education, Spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical; Government; Organization of Production and Distribution; Production..... There are the predominant and essential groupings of qualities, whether they are called Castes or Vocations. In the Aryan race, the four great groups were called Castes and Caste was a scientific system of Social Service according to the inborn qualities of the individual, birth being a convenient, but not essential concomitant".³

1. Indian Ideals in Education, Op.cit. pp.18-19.

2. Bhagavad Gita, Op.cit. p.82.

3. Indian Ideals in Education, Op.cit. pp.20-21.

Annie Besant is fully convinced that the Ideals of Vaidic education have been completely ignored in our modern education, so she "resolved to revive the Ancient Ideals of Indian Education and Indian Culture.....to make Indian Ideals the basis of Indian Civilization, renouncing the hybrid and sterile ideals of anglicised-Indianism, and to adapt them to a new form, instinct with the Ancient Life, and moulding it into a glorious new body for the Ancient Spirit".¹

(B) Curriculum of Vaidic Education

As the history of Vaidic education was spread over many centuries so we naturally find remarkable changes must have taken place in the curriculum in the course of long time. The curriculum was always closely linked with the conditions and the aspirations of the society, so change in curriculum due to change in society was inevitable. In this period Vedas formed the core of curriculum. But Vedas were also re-arranged and re-edited at long intervals to suit the capacities of the people at different periods of history".²

In Upanishads we find an exhaustive list of all that was studied in the time of Vaidic age. The list of subjects includes a good deal more than merely a knowledge of the hymns of the Vedas. The extra-ordinary range of subjects taught in the ancient Universities is amazing, and the more so when we remember that a student was apparently expected,

1. Indian Ideals in Education, Op.cit. p.35.

2. Annie Besant: "Shall India Live or Die?", p.37.

in many cases to know by heart the book he studied. Annie Besant writes "A Brahmana learning one, two, or three Vedas had to learn each by heart, and twelve years' study was assigned to each. Pandit Vasudeva Sarvabhauma was the head of the great university of Nadiya, and it had no college for the study of the Nyaya philosophy. Only one copy of the text-book of Nyaya was extant, and that was in the possession of the University of Mithila. This University refused to allow a copy of the book to be made, but Pandit Vasudeva was not daunted. He went to Mithila as a student and learnt the text-book by heart. Then going back to his own University, he opened a college for Nyaya".¹

A long list of subjects which a pupil had to learn in the Vaidic age will surely amaze us. In the Chandogyaopaniṣad (VIII,11,2) we find Narada went to the Lord Sanat Kumara and asked for instruction. The Supreme Sage asked him what he already knew, and Narada replied "O Lord I have read the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, formed the Atharveda, fifth the Itihāsa-Purāṇa, the Veda of the Vedas (Grammar), the Tithis, the Rasi (the science of numbers), the Daiva (the science of portents), the Nidhi (the science of time), the Vakya (Logic), the Ekavya (ethics), the Dava (etymology), the Brahma (pronunciation), Siksha, Ceremonial, Kalpa, prosody, Chandas, the Bhuta (the science of demons), the Nakshatra-vidya (astronomy), the Sarpa-the

1. India: Bond or Free? Op.cit, p.119.

Devajanavidya (the science of serpents or poisons, the science of the genii, such as making of perfumes, dancing, singing, playing and other fine arts). All this I know, Sir...

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad gives also a somewhat similar list of subjects namely Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvangirasas, Itihasa (legends), Purana (cosmogonies), Vidya (knowledge), the Upanishads, Slokas (Verses), Sutras (prose rules), Anuvyakhyanas (glosses), Vyakhyanas (commentaries).¹

In Takshashila the curriculum was extensive. The sages taught in this University, eighteen Vijjas and the Shilpas, words used for literature and science, and for Arts and Crafts. The use of arms was taught, as we read of skill in archery and javelin - throwing in that time. But before joining the University the students was expected to be educated and must be sixteen years old at least".²

The extracts, given above, clearly show how the curriculum of the Vaidi institutions was developing. But mostly the students were taught according to their caste. The Brahmana followed Literature as a rule, while Kshatriya learned less Literature, but become more skilled in the use of arms. Medicine and surgery and anatomy were there for the future physician, Mathematics for the astronomer. The

1. Keay, F.E.: 'A History of Education in India & Pakistan', p. 31.

2. 'Shall India Live or Die?', Op.cit. p.41.

courses include so much that to follow them all was manifestly impossible.

Annie Besant finds a highly developed University Education in the Vaidic period "for the classes in which deep learning with the object of life, and for those by which Government was carried on, the sons of Brahmanas, of monarchs and nobles, and also of wealthy members of the great merchant community, the organizers of production and distribution: the organizers of production and distribution: the sons of the two latter classes were trained in the Universities in an understanding, not only of literature and science, but also of arts and crafts, so that on their return home they might intelligently examine and supervise their practical carrying out of artists, craftsmen and artisans, thus keeping up a high level of production in the villages, as well as setting a good example by attaching to their own courts or home artists of special skill or of inborn genius, who produced their work at leisure, amply provided with the necessaries and comforts of life".¹

The forest universities had a curriculum which was directly related to the life of the society. The subjects were taught with precision and understanding so that the students may have a practical knowledge of their courses of subjects. The main emphasis was laid on the utility of a

1. Op.cit. 'India: Bond or Free?' pp.108-109.

subject so that the student might be able to grapple with the deepest and difficult problems of life. Writing about the practical utility of the Vaidic curricula Annie Besant says: "We read how young princes, returning from some great university of their time, visited the village artificers to see that they were keeping up to the required level of excellence. It is also worthy of note that great religious Teachers of high rank, such as the Rishi Narada visited the courts of Kings, not merely to give instructions or guidance on high questions of policy, but also to enquire as to the matters which concerned the efficiency and prosperity of those employed in manual work, e.g. asking whether the artisans were properly supplied with the materials for their labour. Under these circumstances it was only natural that the universities should train sons of the "twice-born" cast" (Brahmanas) in the Shilpashastras, previously mentioned, the Scriptures of Arts and Crafts".¹

During the later part of the Vaidic age we find institutions of learned men, such as the Sanghamas of Madura, whose imprimature was sought by writers as the stamp of merit on their works. The fame of these institutions spread over Asia, and later, over Europe, so the students flocked to them from neighbouring lands. In these schools, subjects, given below, were taught: the five Siddhantas, Logic,

1. Ibid. pp.109-110.

Grammar, Philosophy, and Metaphysics, History, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Sanskrit, Pali, Music and Tantric medicines.

(C) Methods of Teaching:

In the Vaidic age the highest education that produced its greatest literature demanded a man's whole life, the earlier part thereof consecrated to study accompanied by much meditation, and the later to the practice of Yoga and the teaching of specially-trained pupils who were to become teachers in their turn.

The Vaidic age did not provide any advanced method of teaching. With the ideal of simplicity of life the methods of education were also simple and directly touching the life of a child. The all-round development of personality was aimed as the chief function of that education. The educational training of the child, writes Annie Besant, "began in the recesses of the forests, wherein a great sage would attract to his Ashrama number of pupils, whose faculties were there developed by the method of meditation, the working out of an abstruse problem, set by the teacher in a brief form, by intense and prolonged concentration upon it, aided by a simple and well balanced and moderately ascetic life".¹

Annie Besant has tried to explain the general method of teaching in vogue in the Vaidic times. She writes that

1. Op.cit. 'India: Bond or Free?', p.110.

"A teacher would give an aphorism, say, to his pupil and send him away to meditate on it, and to bring back the result to him, when he had reached a definite understanding thereof.....Such exercises drew out the latent powers of the student, and may explain the profundity of thought of the great Teacher of the past. They were not concerned with explaining a difficulty, but with stimulating the intellectual powers of their pupils so that these themselves might overcome it".¹

Keay gives a very interesting description of the method of teaching followed in the Vaidic times. This method has been recorded by Gautama, who says: "Taking hold with his right hand of the left hand of his teacher, but leaving the thumb free, the pupil shall address his teacher saying, "Venerable Sir, recite". He shall fix his eyes and his mind on the teacher. He shall touch with Kusa grass the seat of the vital airs (i.e., the organs of sense located in his head). He shall thrice restrain his breath for the space of fifteen moments. And he shall seat himself on the blades of Kusa grass the tops of which are turned to be east. The five vyahritis (i.e., the mystic words Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, Satyam, and Purushah) must each be preceded by the syllable Om and with Satya. Every morning the feet of the teacher must be embraced by the pupil. And this must be done both at the beginning and at the end of a lesson in

1. 'Higher Education in India', pp.14-15.

the Veda. After having received permission, the pupil shall sit down to the east or towards the north, and the Savitri must be recited. All these acts must be performed at the beginning of the instruction in the Veda. The syllable Om must precede the recitation of other parts of the Veda also".¹

The regulations recorded by Gautama may seem to us meaningless, but they were regarded very valuable by those who used them in Vaidic and later times. These must have been intended to impress upon the pupils the devoted sacredness which was supposed to characterize the knowledge which was being communicated to the pupil by the teacher. The most important object of life of the teacher of that time was to transmit the exact contents of the holy literature and the sacrificial and other rules of religious life as he himself had received them by his own teachers.

The teacher in the Vaidic times had to teach only such students who satisfied all the rules of studentship, laid down by the great sages. He would sit at a proper place specified for the teachers. If he had only one pupil or two, they would sit on his right side; if more, they must sit as there was room for them. Keay writes, "At the beginning of each lecture pupils embrace the feet of their teacher and say, Read Sir. The teacher answers, Om, Yes, and then pronounces two words, or if it is a compound, One. When the

1. Keay, F.E.: "A History of Education in India and Pakistan", pp. 38-39.

teacher has pronounced one word, or two, the first pupil repeats the first word; but if there is anything that requires explanation, the pupil says, Sir; and after it has been explained to him (the teacher says) Om, Yes, Sir. In this way they go on till they have finished a prasna (question).... At the end of the last half-verse the teacher say, Sir, and the pupil replies, Om, Yes, Sir, repeating also the verses required at the end of a lecture. The pupils then embrace the feet of their teacher, and are dismissed!¹

Besides helping the pupils to memorize the sacred books the teacher was in the habit of giving explanations when required by the pupils. These explanations were very important because they helped in the clarification of many difficult issues cropped up from the study of sacred literature. The Sutras were composed in condensed form and were studied together with a commentary. In order to illustrate their points the teachers made use of parables from nature or some stories. We find that 'Panchatantra' and the 'Hitopadesa' were given a very important place in the inculcation of moral truths. Besides teaching Vedas, the later Vaidic teachers made good use of fables and allegories in instructing the pupils. The use of fables and allegories must have been felt a psychological necessity in order to relieve the monotony of the laborious process of learning

1. Op.cit. Keay. pp.40-41.

by rote every bit of sacred literature.

In the Vaidic institutions mostly the system of teaching was individual and each pupil was instructed separately so as to pay individual attention because of the individual differences in the pupils. But there were some occasions when the teacher explained to all the pupils the same knowledge at the same time.

In the earlier stages of Vaidic age writing was totally unknown in India, but in the later stage, when the writing came into use the task of teaching writing was also added to the work of the teacher.

Here it would be very interesting to know how the learned sages made the selection of the students for admission to the Vaidic institutions. Prior to admission to the institution the child had to be thoroughly examined by the expert teacher about the experience and knowledge already possessed by him.

In the University of Vikramashila a magnificent building was attached to the University Campus to maintain the open-air character of the forest universities, here the method of selection for admission was a typical one. Annie Besant writes: "A high wall surrounded such an abode, sometimes with a single door, and a learned pandit was the door-keeper, who put the would-be students through an examination, ere he would open the door for his admission -- a literal entrance examination, for the applicant could only enter when he had argued

in satisfactory fashion with the door-keeper".¹

(D) Discipline:

Discipline is the traditional conception of education in India. Education as discipline or Training is the notion that has come down to us through the ages; specially the Vaidic teachers took it their important function to act on the child, to modify his original nature, in order to lead to a desirable and clearly envisaged results.

In the Vaidic period the life was simple and so simple rules of behaviour were observed by all. A teacher had very simple philosophy of teaching. He made no distinction in a rich and a poor student. He treated all in the same manner. Discipline in that time was mild. Quoting Manu Mazumdar writes that a teacher's main duty was to "give instruction for the benefit of his students, without doing injury (by way of punishment) to them, and by using sweet and mild words. But when a pupil committed grave faults he was beaten with a rope or split bamboo on the back part of his body only, and never on the noble part. He who would strike him otherwise would incur the guilt of a thief".²

It shows that there were some definite rules of discipline in the Vaidic age prescribed for the students. It was felt that student's life must be characterized by

1. Op.cit. India: Bond or free? p.112.

2. Mazumdar, Narendranath: "A History of Education in Ancient India", p.78.

dignity, decorum and self-discipline and must be devoted in the acquisition of not only learning but also culture and religion of the race. For infusing piety in the students it was laid down that students should regularly offer the prescribed prayers and sacrifices, both morning and evening. For inculcating good etiquettes and manners it was insisted upon that students should offer proper respect to their elders and teachers. In order to develop character emphasis was laid on moral earnestness. Those things which tend to accentuate the sex impulse were forbidden for the pupils, articles such as meat, sweetmeats, spices, ornaments and garlands etc. Even royal students, staying in an Ashrama were not allowed to have any private money, lest they secretly buy any prohibited article. Annie Besant narrates as a story of the poverty of a prince studying in the ancient Ashrama. She tells "A prince broke a poor man's food bowl and the owner asked for its price, the prince gave his name and that of his state, and promised to repay it after his return, but he was there entirely without money",¹ and was studying there in the Ashrama like a poor man's lad.

A plain life of the student was always recommended: students were to shave their heads clean, bathe once in a day, no oiling or dressing of the hair and the students were not allowed the use of shoes, umberallas and

1. Op.cit. 'Shall India Live or Die?' p.40.

cots.¹ Food and dress was though simple but it was sufficient. The aim in prescribing these rules was to enable the students to form a number of useful habits during the formative period of childhood and adolescence; which were considered to be of good use to them throughout their lives.

(E) Education of Women:

In her concept of the system of education during the Vaidic period, Annie Besant gave an important place to the education of women. Through her thorough study of the ancient Vaidic literature, she was fully convinced that the education of women in the Vaidic times was by no means neglected. According to her, women "were trained in religious knowledge and were familiar with the great Indian epics and with much of the Puranas, to say nothing of the vernacular religious literature. They would learn by heart thousands of lines of these, and would also have stored in their memory many 'Stotras'..... They were thoroughly trained in

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2. Annie Besant writes "The Prince of Benares is sent to Takkasila for his studies with the modest equipment given him by his own royal father 'a pair of one-soled sandals, a sunshade of leaves, and a thousand pieces of money', as his teacher's fees, of which not a single pice could he retain for his private use. Thus the Prince enters his school as a poor man, divested of all riches". Given in India: Bond or Free? Op.cit. pp.116-117.

house-hold economy, in the management of the house, and the knowledge of the duties of dependents and servants. They were skilled in medicine and were the family doctors, and many were highly skilled in artistic needle work and music".¹ The education of women of that time directed to fit them to discharge their functions in life and render them competent to fulfil their weighty duties belonging to them in Indian family life of that time.

In the education of the girls family played a very important role in the Vaidic times. But we find some rare cases of girls being educated at boarding institutions. Altekar refers to an instance, taken from the drama 'Malati-madhava' where it is mentioned that "Kamandaki was educated at a college along with Bhurivasu and Devarata",² but such cases were exceptions, for there was a general prejudice in the people against sending their girls outside home for receiving education. It was greatly insisted upon that girls should be taught at home by their parents. Thus home was the main centre of education of girls in the Vaidic times.

There is a convincing evidence to show that women in the ancient times were eligible for the privilege of studying the Vaidic literature and performing the sacrifices enjoined in it. Women were learned as men were learned, and they even taught the Vedas as men were teachers. This would look

1. Annie Besant: "The Education of the Indian Girls", compiled in "Annie Besant-BUILDER of New India", pp.416-17.

2. Altekar, A.S.: "Education in Ancient India", p.36.

rather surprizing to note, writes Annie Besant, that "some of the mantras of the Vedas, some of the hymns of the Rg-Veda were originally given through women; through their mouths the sacred mantras were spoken.....Not only is it true that some of the Rg. verses were given by women, but we also find their names in the list of spiritual teachers, in the list of great Acharyas, who form the chain of spiritual teachers.....In the Upanishads you read of such a knower of Brahman as Gargi, who questioned Yajnavalkya in the great assembly of sages, being given her place there to put questions as she would".¹

In the ancient times women students were divided into two classes, Brahmavadinis and Sadyodvachas. The former were lifelong students of theology and philosophy; the latter used to prosecute their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16. During the eight or nine years that were thus available to them for study, they used to learn by heart the Vaidic hymns prescribed for the daily and periodical prayers and for those rituals and sacraments in which they had to take an active part after their marriage. The Sadyodvachas also learnt music and dancing and when writing came into general vogue they were initiated into the three R's as a matter of course.

Brahmavadinis used to aim at a very high excellence in scholarship. Besides studying the Vedas, many of them

1. Annie Besant: 'Ancient Ideals in Modern Life', pp.108-109.

used to specialise in Purvamimamse, which discussed the diverse problems connected with Vaidic sacrifices. In that time many dialecticians and Vedantists were women like Gargi, Atreyi, Maitreyi etc. who made real contribution to the advancement of knowledge, for they enjoy the rare privilege of being included among the galaxy of distinguished scholars. Annie Besant had a great praise for the Brahmavadinis as they "wore the sacred thread, had the right of kindling the sacred fire, studied and taught the Vedas.....These were female ascetics.....carrying the danda, wearing the ascetic robesappearing in the very court of the King to carry on discussion on subtle points of religion and philosophy",¹ composed poems some of which have been honoured by their inclusion in the sacred canon.

The orthodox tradition admits that women had a special place in Vaidic times, man could perform the Vaidic sacrifices only if he had his wife by his side. Annie Besant writes: "We find that the women of the house-hold -- the wives and mothers -- enjoyed a large amount of liberty and took their part in a number of public ceremonies. Some of the hymns of the Rg-Veda, just mentioned, were written by wives. We also find records in the Rg-Veda itself of great festivals attended by women who were wives and mothers. We find in the Ramayana, that Kaushalya, the mother of Rama Chandra, was actually the most prominent figure at a great sacrifice at

1. Ibid. p.108.

which were gathered vast crowds of kings, of nobles, of Brahmanas and of the people at large. She performed the act of sacrifice,.....took part in the discussions that occurred between their husband and sages, as in the cases of Draupadi and Sita.....In those days women were really wise and great, that their counsel was highly valued, that their advice was respectfully listened to and followed, because knowledge gave them the authority to pronounce their opinion".¹

On the basis of her thorough study and understanding of the Vaidic system of education of women Annie Besant planned a scheme of education of the Indian girls. This planned scheme was not a true carbon copy of the Vaidic system of women education but it had many preservable features of Vaidic system. Annie Besant also incorporated some assimilable principles of Western education in her scheme of women education in order to make her scheme upto-date and sound one. She implemented her scheme when she established women colleges and schools through out India. Her scheme of women education will be studied in detail in the next chapter.

(F) Importance of the Child

While receiving education in the Vaidic times a child had no importance of any kind, he had to study that which the state considered necessary for its future citizens to

1. Ibid. pp.109-110.

learn. Annie Besant fully believes that Vaidic "systems of education were framed to suit the politics of states and the child had to conform to the particular system".¹

Annie Besant, as an educationist, had given an important place to the child in her system of education. She regarded a child a pivotal necessity in the system of education and recommended that good education must revolve around the child and his capacities.

She firmly believed that a child "is the Eternal Spirit clothed in matter, comes back again into the physical world with the qualities, mental and moral, that he has woven, during his life in the Heaven world, out of the experiences that he gathered in his previous life period on earth.....the child who comes into our hands is not a blank sheet of paper, on which you can write anything you choose, but he has many things written on him already. He has brought with him a definite character, a developed or undeveloped sense that we speak of as conscience, and we have to deal with him, with the character, with the conscience he brings with him; wherever he got them from, he has them when he comes into our hands, in the family and in the school".²

To Annie Besant a child is not a blank sheet of paper to be written upon by the social institutions of the time, but he is a living spiritual intelligence with an immemorial

1. Annie Besant: "The Problems of Reconstruction", p.85.

2. Annie Besant: "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys", pp.68-72.

past behind him and an incalculable future stretching in front of him. He is not a new-comer on this world and he does not come for the first time into this world through birth. She writes "Everytime that he (child) returns, he brings with him the harvests of the past, of past struggles and past defeats and past victories, and the difference between child and child, which shows itself even in infancy, is the difference of the evolution that lies behind them, and the consequent possibilities of the future that lies in front.....He is not a white, empty sheet on which you can write what you please. He is a living being, reacting to your touch according to the nature he has created in his past".¹

Annie Besant's belief in the reincarnation theory had a very close affinity with the scientific theory of heredity. Modern physiologists and biologists admit that a child inherits all the past of his ancestors and of his race. So Annie Besant developed her theory of the importance of the child both by the thorough study of literature concerning reincarnation and heredity. She advocated a theory of education, which was based on her conclusions arrived at, after her copious study. She writes that a child has "inborn faculties, with characteristics inherent in him, however, he may have come by them, whether due to his own experiences or his ancestry..... The educator must recognize these

1. Op.cit. 'The Problems of Reconstruction', pp.83-84.

individual peculiarities, if you are to educate him aright".¹

Annie Besant wanted to plan such a system of education which may give a full recognition to the nature of the child. She gave a sound lesson to the educators of all the times, when she wrote: "You must understand your child before you can teach him. You must find out what the child wants to know, and what his capacities fit him to learn, and remove the incapacities if he has any".²

Annie Besant's system of education based on her understanding of the child and his natural tendencies will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

(G) Teacher Training

In the works of Annie Besant there is no reference, anywhere, to show the conditions and position of the training of teachers of the Vaidic age. Even in the history of Indian education, it does not appear that any institution like Teacher's Training colleges of the modern time existed, in the Vaidic age.

It must have been, therefore, the custom of the Vaidic time that no further training was deemed necessary for the learned person in order to qualify him for the teaching profession. Only students with good cramming power and capacity to meet the challenge successfully through the fiery

1. Ibid. p.85.

2. Ibid. p.85.

ordeal of Sastrartha (debates) proved later on efficient teachers. To become a successful teachers the persons were required to have powers of debate and discussion incessantly for long time. The graduates of a Vaidic University, through the Sastrarthas, had a fairly good experience of presenting and justifying their points well and this was the most important qualification required of a teacher for the higher education.

(H) Vocational Education

To Annie Besant vocational education is that education which fits a man "to take up some particular work in the state".¹ Under the Vaidic system, youths were trained for the future vocational functions inside the four-walls of the house, under the direct guidance of the parents. Each family belonged to a particular caste or vocation. Each caste gave a particular vocational education and experience to its children and thus specialization in a special field was the chief function of that time.

In Vaidic India the central thought was the Family -- the man, the woman and the children. The dominant thought of the family was that of mutual obligation, which closely bound a man to the social organism. Children received their vocational education inside the home according to their

1. Annie Besant: 'The School Boy as Citizen', p.14.

particular caste. At that time society was divided into four castes into which all vocations existed and the parents prepared their children to participate in their vocations from very early childhood. So the vocational education was learnt practically rather than theoretically. The main castes with their vocational functions have been explained by Annie Besant as "There were first the Brahmans, the spiritual caste, the teachers of the young, the teachers of the people in the spiritual life, the students, the priests, the literary class -- the class, that is, that includes the great intellectual professions as well as the spiritual order, and consists of those who are naturally, by their intellectual and spiritual qualities, fitted to be the guides and teachers of the people. Then after them the Kshattriyas, the warrior caste, the royal and ruler class, the class that administered justice, that saw to the administration of the state, that defended it from internal disturbance as well as against foreign aggression. Then the Vaishyas, the merchant class, that included all the commercial and trading classes and the agriculturists. And lastly, the Shudras or the serving caste. Those four castes are those which were originally instituted and those which still remain, though masked by the innumerable sub-castes".¹

The caste-system had given stability to Indian life

1. Annie Besant: "India, Her Past and Her Future", p.41.

of the Vaidic age because castes preserved the vocational sanctity necessary at that time for the people. These four castes existed as the four great schools guiding, helping and training the society in the vocations of the parents very successfully.

(I) Development of the Total Personality
of the Individual.

The education given to the children in the Vaidic age provided four-fold training and thus developed the total personality of the individual child. Through Vaidic education every part of man's nature received its proper training. The result was that, writes Annie Besant "when the boys went out into the world, they went out ready to play their parts as members of a great state, as citizens of a great nation -- highly pious, moral, learned and strong."¹

Vaidic education was four-fold in its nature. The education given to a boy was one which drew out his powers in the four great factors which form the human constitution. The boy was placed in the hands of his teacher to be trained and educated on every side of his nature. Vaidic education aimed at building up a true man of the world, complete in all respects. The four-faceted programme of Vaidic education has been greatly appreciated by Annie Besant in her many lectures and writings because she believed that that education

1. Annie Besant: "Ancient Ideals in Modern Life", p.20.

helped very much in the development of the total personality of the individual.

Let us see how Annie Besant approached the process of total development through the four-fold system:-

1. The Knowledge of Scriptures: To Annie Besant the knowledge of scriptures was the primary important aspect of the Vaidic education. She writes: "Firstly we always read of boys that were versed in the Vedas. The boys were taught religion: they were trained in the sacred literature of their faith, and in the actual daily practice of their religious ceremonies. Thus we find that Ram Chandras was not only thoroughly trained in the knowledge of the Scriptures, but also that he performed His Sandhya morning and evening; and was thus trained in the outer religious duties, as well as in sacred learning, both being necessary for the evolution of spirituality.....Under the wire hands of His teacher, He learned the great Science of the Self, the Secret of Peace; His religious nature was trained and developed".¹ In the same way the teachers of the Vaidic age gave their full attention to the teaching of the sacred science of Vaidic literature to their pupils and withheld no part of it from their pupils.

With the passage of time when the Vaidic literature

1. Ibid. p.19.

took a definite shape and new rules and regulations were formed, a new literature, known as Sutras, came into being. The sacred books which had to be mastered by the students had increased to huge bulk and it was necessary to condense their teaching into some convenient form. The Sutras or 'threads' consist of pithy phrases, in which condensation and brevity have been carried out to such an extent that the result was often an obscurity which could only be explained by a commentary. But it was essential for every student of scriptures to commit to memory the important Sutras because they were considered as the store house of sacred literature.

In praising the Vaidic sacred literature Annie Besant writes: "It is this great literature, belonging to India as a whole, the knowledge on which her sublime religion is built, that is the rock on which India's nationality is firmly founded. The absurd idea that her feeling of Nationality has grown out of British Rule is too silly for discussion.....The English "man in the street" has never heard of Jambudvipa, of Aryavarta, the land of the Aryans, of Bharatavarsha, the land of the Bharatas. He has never heard of the Hindu prayers which name the seven sacred cities in extreme north and extreme south of India, as in extreme east and west, nor of the pilgrims who travelled to these, familiar to every Hindu in his daily prayers.

The philosophical and religious literature is common to all India, and is studied all over India. The same Rishies, and sages and saints are revered all over India, and every Indian is equally proud of them. These are the foundations, in the thought and life of her people of their sense of Nationality".¹

2. Training in Morality:

The second important facet of the Vaidic education was the moral training. The moral, as well as the spiritual nature were thoroughly trained by the Vaidic teacher. "The students were taught", writes Annie Besant, "to be obedient, reverent, truthful, brave, courteous, to love and respect their parents and teachers, to be unselfish, to concern themselves with the welfare of those around them."²

During the Vaidic period rigid rules were laid down for the moral and religious training and the regulation of good manners of the pupils. Keay writes: "It was the student's duty to bathe daily, and to avoid honey, meat, perfumes, garlands, sleep in the day time, ointments, collyrium, a carriage, shoes, a parasol, love, anger, covetousness, perplexity, garrulity, playing musical

1. "Shall India Live or Die", Op.cit. p.38.

2. "Ancient Ideals in Modern Life", Op.cit.p.20.

instruments, bathing (for mere pleasure sake), cleaning the teeth, elation, dancing, singing, calumny, and terror, and all pungent foods. The pupil was enjoined always to speak the truth and to avoid bitter speeches. He was always to speak in a respectful manner of superiors".¹

The student made to intend on the welfare of others. In giving moral education the teacher instructed the pupil saying: "Say what is true? Do thy duty. Do not neglect the study of the Veda. Do not swerve from the truth. Do not swerve from duty. Do not neglect what is useful. Do not neglect greatness. Do not neglect the learning and teaching of the Vedas".² Thus moral education of the Vaidic times helped a great deal in the formation of moral character of the pupils.

3. The Training of the Intellect:

The third important facet of Vaidic education was the training of the intellect. Annie Besant writes that in the Vaidic age "the boys were taught the different branches of science and instructed in various kinds of theoretical and practical knowledge. Intelligence, the third part of human nature, received its proper training

1. Key, F.E.: A History of Education in India and Pakistan, p.24.

2. Brahadranyaka Upanishad, iii,3,1,iii,7,1 given by Key, F.E. in 'A History of Education in India and Pakistan, p.20.

along with the spiritual and the moral".¹ A well-organized curricula was taught in the forest schools of the Vaidic times. The subjects of studies were taught only according to their immediate and practical utility.

Annie Besant writes: "The highest Hindu intellectual training was based on the practice of Yoga, and produced as its fruits, those marvellous philosophical systems, the six Darshanas and the Brahma Sutras".² which are still the delight of scholars of today.

4. Physical Education:

Fourthly the Vaidic education stressed at the training of the body. Annie Besant writes: "The physical part received due attention. They were taught games and manly exercises, to ride, to drive, to manage their own bodies, and the bodies of the animals who served the need of man".³

Besides the four-fold education system of the Vaidic time, Annie Besant also appreciate the Vow of Brahmacharya recommended by the Vaidic teachers to the students to be followed during the period of student life. She writes: "I find every student was under that vow of

1. 'Ancient Ideals in Modern Life', Op.cit.p.20.

2. "India: Bond or Free?" Op.cit. p.110.

3. "Ancient Ideals in Modern Life", Op.cit.p.20.

virginity, of absolute celibacy; and until the student period was over, he was not permitted to enter the household life. Thirty-six, eighteen or nine years -- these are the periods given for student life. During that period absolute celibacy was imposed upon the students".¹

After undergoing the four-faceted programme of education and the vow of Brahmacharya the boy, who returned home after completing his education, had all-round development of him, he had full flush and vigour of manhood in him ready to enter the duties of life.

In this chapter we have only studied Annie Besant's concept of Indian system of Education of the Vaidic period and her views with regard to different aspects of education of that time. But how Annie Besant tried to apply her knowledge of Vaidic education in her scheme of national Education for India by establishing colleges, schools and planning a national university of India, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

1. "Ancient Ideals in Modern Life", Op.cit. p.25.

C H A P T E R - V I

PART I

In the preceding chapters we have dealt with the educational philosophy of Annie Besant in detail. But apart from her philosophical thought it is necessary to consider how Annie Besant tried to give a practical shape to her understanding of the philosophy of education.+ In the present chapter we shall, therefore, explain her experiments, which she made while establishing educational institutions all over India, in the reform of Indian education. She worked incessantly for the educational renaissance of India for more than thirty-five years and thus became successful in influencing greatly the social life of the modern Indian society.

(A) Revival of the Spirit of Vaidic Education:

Annie Besant was quite confident that Indian life could be revived only if we were able to follow the same order in which the descent of the social life of the people had taken place. She tried to restore the Vaidic four faceted programme of education in modern Indian society. She urged upon the students to understand, writes Annie Besant, "You are constituted of four important elements: your body, the instrument of your actions; your emotions, the root of your happiness or sorrow, your virtues and vices; your mind, the builder of your

character and the director of activity; yourself, the spirit, the Inner Ruler Immortal, the broken rays of whose perfection are what we call down here the Good, the Beautiful and the True".¹ So in reviving the spirit of Vaidic education and culture Annie Besant divided her method of education into four parts: (a) Physical training, (b) Moral training, (c) Intellectual training, and (d) Spiritual and Religious training. In many of her lectures and writings Annie Besant tried to explain the ways to develop each sub-division of her method. She writes: "We must carry on right training in the four departments of life -- physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual".²

(a) Physical Training: Annie Besant gave a very important place to physical training in the education of the children. She felt grieved to see the Indian education of her time under-estimating the value of physical training. She found that old wise proportion and the orderly development of the body inculcated in the Vaidic India had slipped out of sight of the modern Indians. Urging upon the importance of physical training, Annie Besant writes: "Unless a boy's body is strong and healthy he cannot, as a man, do all he should in life and for his country. The training of the boy's body is as important as part of education as the training of his mind".³

1. Annie Besant: "The Future of Young India", p.7.

2. Annie Besant: "The Problems of Reconstruction", p.93.

3. Annie Besant: "Education as a National Duty", p.10.

Annie Besant is considerate that the body must be trained and developed in youth and unless it is well trained in youth it remains weak for the whole of the later life.

While stressing the importance of physical training in youth, Annie Besant writes "Youth is the only time for making a strong and vigorous body. You may learn all your lives, but the fixing of the fate of the body is done in youth. Mischief done to the body then can never be made good".¹

To Annie Besant a school or a college is not performing its duties fully if physical training does not form a definite part of its curriculum. To her physical training does not stop with the exercise of the body but many qualities of character are inculcated through it. In explaining these qualities Annie Besant write "They are: quickness of thought, alertness in understanding the situation, swiftness of decision, promptitude of action, and accuracy of judgement. These qualities are wanted to make a good citizen, and a useful man, and these are the qualities which are largely developed in the playing field, in the games.....The boy learns to work with others by subordinating himself to a common object, and to subordinate his own success to that of his side. He learns the very qualities which are wanted in the man, of action, in the true patriot".²

1. "The Future of Young India", Op.cit. p.8.

2. "Education as a National Duty", Op.cit.p.11.

Annie Besant gave useful suggestions about the diet of a child because food is closely linked with the physical fitness of a man. She recommends good, plain, nourishing and unstimulating food for a growing child. She desired that a boy should not take too many sweets, much spice, nor pepper and food must not be so tasty and savoury that a child may eat too much.

Annie Besant recommended some exercises for the children, such as running, jumping, climbing, deep and full breathing, practising dumb-bells, clubs, learning boxing, fencing and swimming. She desired that children should sleep early at night and get up early in the morning. She sympathetically recommended to the children to "keep your bodies chaste and pure and to that end never let your mind dwell on sex, nor your tongue take part in dirty talk, in unclean gossip. Nothing you can do in exercise and athletics will make your body strong, if you yield to vicious habits. If a boy begins talking vice to you, tell him contemptuously to be silent; and if he persists, knock him down. You are to be the fathers of the next generation of India's sons, and you hold in trust for India the purity which alone can make you strong. A clean youth makes a strong manhood, a vigorous maturity, a noble old age. Pitiful are the bodies weakened by early vice, contemptible, unmanly. Rightly and wisely did the ancients impose Brahmacharya on the student".¹

1. "The Future of Young India", Op.cit. p.9.

To Annie Besant games are very useful for the children because they not only train the muscles of the body but also give a training of character. She urged upon the teachers to give those games to the children which may help them in bringing out the virtues of co-operation, discipline, perseverance, endurance and courage in them.

Annie Besant considered the need for physical training more important for the Indians than the intellectual training. In a lecture she says "The chief danger for India is that of physical decay. There is a lack of physical vitality in the English-educated class. There is no difficulty about brains; you have enough and to spare. There is no difficulty about keenness and subtlety of intellect; that is born in you. But your bodies: there is the weak point of the nation of the future. The bodies of English-educated Indians are old before they ought to be middle-aged; their nervous systems are not what they should be on account of the strain put upon the boys before they are grown into full manhood. Games and athletics do much to counter-balance over-absorption in study.....Until education is over, no boy should enter into the ashrama of the grihastha. That is the best physical wisdom. That is the custom which wise men should revive for building up a strong nation in days to come. You cannot have a nation without strength in your own bodies to bear the burdens of citizenship."¹

1. Annie Besant: "Education as the Basis of National Life", pp.13-14.

In all the institutions established by Annie Besant throughout India she gave a high place to the physical training in the curriculum. She encouraged Indian as well as western games for the pupils so that the body of the pupils may fully develop.

(b) Moral Training: It is through the training of the powers of the Emotion that moral nature of a man can be trained. To Annie Besant, morality is the science of harmonious relations, she finds "that out of emotion grow up all attractions that make a family, a town, a community and a nation that bind men together into nations and the peoples".¹

But emotions also help in growing those forces which pull down and destroy the family and the community. So emotion, on the one side, build a society and on the other side they break it down. We find after a detailed study that every virtue and every vice has its root in emotion. Love-emotion as a permanent mood is a virtue that builds up families and states. But hate-emotion is the root of all vices and it breaks up human relations, drives men apart from each other and leads them to destruction. All the vices which ruin nations grow out of the hate-emotion between man and man. Thus the understanding of the culture of emotions necessarily becomes a vital part of Education.

Annie Besant believed that for the service of the community those emotions are essential which teach self-

1. Annie Besant: "Education as a National Duty", p.12.

control to the children. She advises the children "you must learn self-control, you must encourage Right emotion, and starve out wrong by turning away from it. You need to cultivate courage and endurance, kindness and helpfulness, truth and generosity. You must show reverence to all that is worthy of it: to God, to your parents, to your teachers. You must protect the weak, show tenderness to the aged, be courteous to the poor, to all below you in rank. Never speak a rough word to one whose position renders impossible a rough retort, and never cringe to a superior. Never lie, either from fear or greed, nor play the hypocrite to please".¹

Annie Besant recommended, besides the Indian games, the use of English games to children in the training of emotions because she was sure that there was a possibility to "learn in them self-control and good temper, to win victory without vulgar elation, to bear defeat with a smile. And they teach also the subordination of the individual to the team, and of personal success to the success of the whole. They develop power of leadership, loyalty to a leader, quickness of judgment, promptness of action. Play chivalrously, honourably, bravely, generously, and you will play well the great game of life".²

Annie Besant supplies us a practical solution to the moral training of the children. She writes: "Moral Education

1. The Future of Young India", Op.cit. pp.9-10.

2. Ibid. p.10.

should form part of the curriculum. Daily, in every class, a brief portion of some sacred book should be read and explained, and its moral lessons enforced by illustrations; their bearing on individual, family, social and national life should be shown, and the evil results of their opposed vices should be expounded. Occasion should be taken with the elder youths to explain the scientific basis -- the basis in nature -- on which moral precepts are founded and to point out the wisdom of Hindu religious practices. They will thus acquire an intelligent appreciation of the value of religion and morality".¹

(c) Intellectual Training: Annie Besant thinks that in India the training of the mind is mistakenly looked upon as the sole purpose of education. An education directed to one part of the boy's nature, developing the intelligence and training the intellect; but it entirely neglected the spiritual nature and disregarded the physical and moral training. Annie Besant felt that such an education "can never built up a true man of the world",² who may be able to discharge his duties in a perfect manner. With the development of only intelligence, only one quarter of man's whole nature has been trained, and with the result that "moral character has been neglected, spirituality has been ignored, body has been left weak, overstrained, overworked".³

1. Annie Besant: "The Education of Hindu Youth", Given in "The Birth of New India", p.109.

2. Annie Besant: "The Ancient Ideals in Modern Life", p.21.

3. Ibid. p.21.

Annie Besant thought that by neglecting all other sides and by giving only the intellectual training we may get very active, efficient and clever men but they prove "selfish, thinking only of their own aims, each man fighting for his own hand, careless of the welfare of the nation as a whole, gaining for himself or for his family, caring not how others suffer provided that he succeeds, looking on with cold and indifferent eyes at all wrongs perpetrated around him his heart not moved with sympathy for the trouble and misery of the people. He is a man developed in intelligence but lacking in character, in self-respect, in public spirit, in straight-forward speaking of truth, in uprightness of words and life. That is the result we see around us, the result of the neglect of religion and of morality".¹

But this does not mean that intellectual education has any defect in it. The glaring defect in the educational system in Annie Besant's time was due to lack of moral, physical and spiritual education and over-estimation of the intelligence and intellect in the system of education. But the training of the mind is immense as a subject and its importance is very great also in the modern system of education.

Annie Besant felt that intellectual training was that where the chief thing was to try to understand thoroughly and to attend. She writes "To be able to attend to what you

1. Ibid. p.22.

are doing is one of the conditions of success in all intellectual study. Do not let your mind wander about, keep it on the one thing to which you ought to be attending at the time. And if you ever think a lesson is dull, you may sometimes make it interesting, by remembering that it is only as your brain grows trained by study that you can hope to help India, as you all hope to do when you grow up".¹

Explaining the intellect training to the students in one of her political lectures Annie Besant said, "Remember that education does not mean the storing the memory with facts; it means drawing out the faculties of the mind and bringing them under control, so that you can address them to any question, and deal efficiently and adequately with the problem of life as they present themselves. You need to cultivate observation, accuracy, discrimination, the power of classification, the seeing of things in true proportion -- that is, the perception of values, and of the relation of one object to another. Thinking is the establishment of relations. You must cultivate attention, both alert and sustained, for concentration is only formal and developed attention, and without concentration no mastery of great questions is possible".²

In providing a right kind of intellectual training Annie Besant recommended the principles of the intellectual

1. Annie Besant: "The Fourfold Education", p.10.

2. "The Future of Young India", Op.cit., pp.10-11.

curriculum to be followed in every institution, may it a college or a school. To her 'India' took a first place in the construction of curriculum. In educating the Indian students each subject was studied in such a way that Indian approach might be brought-forth to the child. She wanted to stress three points, while discussing the intellectual training. Firstly, that for Indian student it was considered very important to read Indian history, Indian philosophy, Indian medicine, Indian art, Indian industry, her natural resources, her commerce, her possibilities -- all these subjects were to be brought forward and these were made a part of every scheme of Indian education. Secondly, Annie Besant wished to see Indians controlling the curriculum which might suit the nation's needs. Thirdly she wanted that though India may borrow any foreign method or principle or theory of education, but it must assimilate it and make it her own -- Indian in ideals and practice. Annie Besant used to say: "You may dig your gold wherever you like -- in Australia, America, or India -- but you must stamp it in the Indian Mint".¹

For intellectual growth of the children, Annie Besant encouraged the teaching of sciences. She believed that merely literary education is not enough and it is only scientific education which would be able to add to the productive resources of the country. She wanted to see the illustrative

1. The Newspaper "New India" of 21 January, 1918, edited by Annie Besant.

examples, in the Indian scientific books, not foreign but Indian. She forcefully declared that all the science books must "be re-written from the Indian standpoint, utilizing Indian animals, Indian plants, Indian trees, and minerals as the examples by which the boys will learn, thus bringing scientific teaching into touch with the Indian life of their own country.

Annie Besant wanted the similar treatment with the teaching of history. She writes: "I do not mean that in your own schools and colleges only Indian history should be taught. That would be a great mistake. But what I do mean is that Indian history should be taught first, and that Indian history should not be taught by rote, out of dry manuals written sometimes by Englishmen who care neither for the tradition of the land nor for its future elevation".¹ Annie Besant wanted that Indian history for the schools and colleges must be written with the glowing passion of Indian patriots, who shall tell the story of Indian past to the boys with pride and thus inspire hopes of the future.

Annie Besant stressed also the bearing of education on commerce. She told the students in a lecture that "In the days of old you were a great commercial people; you were great ship builders, sending your ships over the whole world

1. "Education as the Basis of National Life", Op.cit. p.17.

and carrying on a great commerceUnless you educate your trading classes, you will never revive that commerce of the past. Shrewd as the commercial classes are, they are too narrow in their views, and too wedded to their particular fashions, to do what is needed for the nation. We should educate them by tens, hundreds and thousands, and to give back to India the possibilities of active commercial life".¹

In the pursuit of intellectual training Annie Besant thought that an essential part of every school and college should be the debating club or the institution's parliament, managed by the students themselves. She wished that boys must learn to discuss and debate. She writes: "A well-organized college club, in which the young man learn to listen to the arguments of opponents without losing temper to detect sophistries, to see argumentative flaws, to be alert in answering, in attacking, in defending, is a splendid nursery for public life. The debating societies.....have been the training grounds of statesmen. Men learn to think, to speak, to debate, they are drilled in patience and good temper and the amenities of public life, and learn to differ as gentlemen, not as boors".²

(d) Spiritual Training: In the system of Indian education, in Annie Besant's times, the spiritual nature as a study was

1. "Education as a National Duty", Op.cit. pp.16-17.

2. "Education as the Basis of National Life", Op.cit.pp.21-22.

totally ignored. The spiritual nature could be unveiled and unfolded only by the study of the detailed study of the sacred literature and by the understanding of religion. Annie Besant took religion as a part and parcel of a complete life of a man she recommended its study to every student. She writes:

"Religion is not to be kept outside your life, and more than outside a school. Religion is the one thing that teaches us how to sacrifice ourselves for the common good, and we shall never have men working with all their hearts for the greatness of India, until the spiritual side is developed which makes them understand that the good of one must always be subservient to the good of all".¹

To Annie Besant all the religions of the world have all one aim, i.e., the Realization of the Self, the knowledge of God. Annie Besant says "Outward rites and ceremonies are intended for the training of the body, to overcome its sloth to teach temperance in all things, to make it a useful servant not a tyrannical master. Their moral precepts are directed to the training of the emotions of the loftiest end. Their metaphysics and philosophies aim at the highest development of the intellect. But the essence of Religion is Unity, the Realization of one God, within and without flowering into the Brotherhood of all that lives".

1. "The Fourfold Education", Op.cit. pp.13-14.

2. The Future of Young India, Op.cit. p.13.

In making children of India familiar of their religion Annie Besant recommended them the study of the sacred literature, to her students of central Hindu College she delivered weekly lectures on Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Yoga philosophy, which were later on published by the college in the form of books. She edited two books on Hindu religion which gave a clear and definite outline of Hindu doctrines, Hindu ceremonies and Hindu ethics. These books were adopted as text-books of Hindu religion. The first book was a little catechism, meant for little boys and girls in the Primary standards. The second was meant for the middle and upper classess in the High Schools and colleges.

Annie Besant helped many Indians in the translation of Indian ancient sacred literature with the hope that the great teachings of the great sages of the past may become assimilated all over India through the vehicle of english language. Her books of stories of the ancient brave men and women of India, were prescribed in many schools and colleges as text-books, which provided spiritual and religious knowledge of the past.

(B) Incorporation of the Assimilable Principles of Western Education into a Sound Scheme of National Education for India:

It was acherished desire of Annie Besant to make a sound scheme of national education for India. She was alive enough to realize that, no doubt, Indian education

desired to be founded on a knowledge of the past of the country and designed in accordance with the ancient traditions of India but to meet, at every point, the national needs of the Indian nation it badly required to have some assimilable important principles of western education in it.

We have already seen that Annie Besant had taken a prominent part in the education of the people of England, she writes "I have had some means of judging of the kind of work that is the most useful and proper preparation for dealing with education. In my own personal life I have had experience.....in the line of an educational expert, as a Member of the great School Board of London, having had the duty of looking after a large number of schools personally, and of debating all questions arising on general educational policy; at another time for several years I discharged the duty of teaching classes, under South Kensington, and was exceptionally successful in results".¹

Due to her personal experience as a teacher, a member of School Board of London and a public speaker for the cause of education in England, she had a thorough understanding of the European system of education, so when she planned the scheme of Indian National education, her past experiences made her possible to incorporate some principles of Western education in the education system of India.

1. "Education as a National Duty", Op.cit. p.4.

We shall discuss all the important principles of Western education which Annie Besant incorporated in her scheme of National Education for India, when we shall take up the discussion of her scheme of National education in this chapter. But here it is suffice to mention some of the aspects of education which she approved of as important for the scheme of National education.

Ideals in Education: Annie Besant found that "one of the greatest defects in the education of boys in India is the absence of this presentation of ideals and the consequent absence of enthusiasm".¹ So Annie Besant, planning the scheme of Indian education, wanted to Indianize the educational system.

In England the chief efforts in establishing the schools and colleges had been voluntary rather than governmental and the government was only to step in to fill up the gaps in the voluntary system. Annie Besant being a product of English education system wanted the same system to be followed in India. She was desirous that Indian education must be Indian in ideals and spirit and should "not so much a matter for the Government as for the nation.....What is wanted in Education is that the country itself should build its universities and support its schools".² She was grieved

1. "Annie Besant Builder of New India", Op.cit. p.398.

2. "Education as a National Duty", Op.cit. pp.6-7.

to see that one of the great difficulties of education in India was the fact that it was too much a Government affair. She established all the institutions without any Governmental aid and help.

The Central Hindu College, a great experiment of Annie Besant in Indian education, was purely an institution started by her with the donations from Hindus of India, whose aims were to teach the deep truths of Hindu Religion and seeking to unite the best of Hindu Culture with the best of Western principles of education. Many were the pitiful tales told in those of children who walked literally for hundred of miles, living on the rice-balls found at places of sacrifice to request admission to this college of their dreams, where they could gain a true Arya education.

Annie Besant also considered the necessity for religion as an integral part of education. When she came in India in 1893 the Britishers had disallowed the teaching of religion in Indian schools and religion was allowed to be taught in the home. Only Annie Besant was fully aware of the great importance of religion in the schools of England, so she urged upon the Indians to make religion also a subject of study. In most of her lectures she stressed the need for religious education in schools. In one lecture she says, "Do not tell me that religious training may be given in the home If you leave it out of education, you shut it out of life. The boys will learn the things which are in

the educational curriculum, and will treat outside subjects of study with indifference, if not with contempt. Nor will they turn in later life to the study ostracized in the school and the college. Then the world will have hardened them; then social ambition will have fettered them; the brains will be less plastic, the hearts less warm, than in the eager and passionate days of youth. Life's ideals must be wrought in the soft clay of youth, and they will harden into firm material with maturity. Train your boys and girls in religion, and then only will they become the men and the women that India needs.

"See how the great men of your part were religious men.....Those of you who would have India great, those of you who would see her mighty, remember that the condition of national greatness is the teaching of religion to the young. Teach them to be religious without being sectarian. Teach them to be devoted without being fanatical. Teach them to love their own faith, without decrying or hating the faiths of their fellow-citizens. Make religion a unifying force, not a separative, make religion the fostering mother of civic virtues, the nurse and teacher of morality. Then shall the boys and girls grow up into the great citizens of the India that shall be; then shall they live in an India, mighty, prosperous, and free; then shall they look back with gratitude, to those who, in the days of darkness, lifted up the light,

and gave the religious teaching which alone makes good citizens and great men".¹

Annie Besant made religion a compulsory subject in the schools. She compiled two good books on Hindu religion which were used as text-books not only in her own schools but, with her efforts those books were prescribed in many other schools and universities of India.

While drafting her scheme of National education Annie Besant had realized that only literary education of the children was not enough. She wanted also to incorporate the Technical education in her system of education. The progress of the industry of England with the industrial revolution was before Annie Besant's eyes, she was confident that in her Central Hindu College and other National institutions technical education will prove very useful. So in all her schools Technical Education was given a special place. In her National scheme of education Annie Besant had introduced diversified streams of courses where Technical stream was implemented with subjects like Industrial History, Engineering Mechanics, Electricity, etc.

Annie Besant gave an important place to physical training in her educational system. She found Indian education lacking very badly in this aspect. Annie Besant was confident that without physical education life cannot fully

1. Annie Besant Builder of New India, Op.cit. pp.407-408.

develop. She considered that the body must be trained and developed in youth and unless it was well trained in youth it remained weak for the whole of the later life. She writes "Youth is the only time for making a strong and vigorous body. You may learn all your lives, but the fixing of the fate of the body is done in youth Mischief done to the body then can never be made good".¹

She had tried to implement the scheme of scouting in her schools. Scouting scheme was originally implemented in the British schools. Annie Besant applied for the application of the Indian branch of Scouting with the London headquarters of the Baden-Powell Scouts Association which was rejected by British officers in the Scout Movement in India was insufficient to justify the extension of Scouting among Indians during the first world war. At moment Annie Besant found the rejection of the application, she was in arms. She regarded it an insult flung at India. Thus Annie Besant founded the Indian Boy Scouts Association in 1917.

The National scheme of education drafted by Annie Besant had a special feature of physical training in it. She introduced English games side by side with Indian games in order to bring Indian students at the same standards with the western students.

1. "The Future of Young India", Op.cit. p.8.

In her scheme of national education Annie Besant introduced also other assimilable principles of western education such as providing a good education to the women, young a special importance to the study of mother tongue and providing the teaching of the foreign languages, introducing debating clubs and mock parliaments in the schools and colleges, attaching a boarding house with each school and college, provision of teaching a universal history for the understanding of internationalism. We shall discuss all these aspects in detail when we will study her scheme of national education.

(C) Education Experiments

Annie Besant made a large number of educational experiments after her arrival in India in 1893. These experiments clearly demonstrate her thorough understanding of the problems of Indian education and her masterly capability to solve them successfully. Here we shall try to explain her educational experiments.

I - The Madras Parliament:

Annie Besant did not consider education merely to be the instruction of 3R's. To her education was a very wide and limitless subject covering social, political and cultural life of the people. She believed that a true education must provide a thorough knowledge of religion, duties

towards the society and an understanding of political situations, especially the training of parliamentary activities.

She was greatly in favour of providing Parliament training to the people. When ever she got a chance she found a parliament.

In 1887 when she was of forty years and was a staunch socialist she had started a mock Parliament. The main purpose of this parliament was to give practice in parliamentary rules and procedures and learn the duties and privileges of cabinet officers by assuming these offices themselves. In the Charing Cross Parliament, H.H. Champion was Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Annie Besant was Home Secretary, G.B. Shaw was President of the Local Government Board, Webb was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bland was Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Headlam was Secretary for Ireland and so on down the line. In her Fabian Section of the paper 'Our Corner', Annie Besant duly chronicled all the activities of her 'Parliament', noting especially the many speeches and motions by herself, all of which she summed up in her autobiography by saying.

"Some amusement turned up in the form of Charing Cross Parliament, in which we debated with much vigour our "burning questions" of the day. We organized a compact Socialist party, defeated a Liberal Government, took the reins of

office, and -- after a Queen's speech in which Her Majesty addressed her loyal commons with a plainness of speech never before (or after) heard from the throne -- we brought several Bills of a decidedly heroic character..... I.....came in for a good deal of criticism in connection with various drastic measures".¹

In her Central Hindu College, Benaras, established in 1898 Annie Besant also organized a Mock Parliament for providing parliamentary training to the students. We shall discuss the parliament of the Central Hindu College when we shall take up her Central Hindu College experiment.

But here the Madras Parliament, organized by Annie Besant needs a detailed mention.

In January 1915 Annie Besant took steps to form an association intended to promote the civic education of the citizens of Madras, by the full and free discussion of all questions affecting the public interests under the rigid rules of Parliamentary procedures. She wrote in her daily newspaper 'New India' of 11th February, 1915 that "It is felt that there is much talk and writing of a loose and uninformed kind, which will be corrected by the study necessary for the formulation of any question within the four corners of a Bill, its defence against shrewd and well directed criticism, and the often merciless exposure

1. Annie Besant: "An Autobiography", p.419.

of poor knowledge and poor logic which has to be faced in debate Moreover such debate teaches self-control, courtesy, promptitude, mental alertness, and power of speech, and is an invaluable training for any who are taking part, or intend to take part, in public life".¹

Annie Besant was confident that for direct criticism over a Bill on any question of public interest there was a great need for the formation of a Parliament. By taking her previous experience, of the founding of Charing Cross Parliament in England and Mock Parliament in Central Hindu College, into consideration, Annie Besant believed that such an institution would discharge a most useful function in Madras as well as would surely train men and women capable of taking a useful and dignified part in public life. So, for organizing the Madras Parliament, a Committee of the following eminent men of Madras was formed.

M. Adinarayana Iyah	Yakoob Hassan
T. Sadasivier	B.P. Wadia
K. Ramanujachariar	V.M. Muthuswami Naidu
G. Soobhiah Chetty	C. Jinarajadasa
T. Rangachariar	V. Masilamani Pillai
M.A. Kuddus Badsha Sahah	B. Subramaniam
C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar	C.G. Govindaraja Mudaliar
K.C. Desikachariar	V.V. Srinivasa Aiyengar
	Annie Besant

1. Editorial of "New India", 11th February, 1915, p.3.

The rules and regulations of the Madras Parliament framed by Annie Besant and noted by her in her newspaper "New India" dated 11th February, 1915, were as follows:-

1. The name shall be the Madras Parliament. The Parliamentary procedures shall be followed.

2. The electorates shall be : (i) any bodies incorporated under Act XXI of 1860; (ii) any statutory bodies, or associations or public bodies, other than those of students, carrying out any public purpose, political, social, educational, commercial, literary, etc., that shall enter themselves on the electoral roll of the Parliament, with a statement of the number of their members.

3. The number of members to be elected by any such electorate shall be tentatively assigned by the Committee named in Rule 8 in proportion to the number of persons in the electorate.

4. The number of votes possessed by any voter shall be equal to the number of persons to be elected by electorate in question and the voter may plump for a single candidate, or distribute his votes over the candidates in any proportion he pleases.

5. Any person may be elected as member who is of the age of 21 years and upwards, not being in status pupillari, and not having been convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude.

6. Voting shall be by ballot, the number of votes given to any candidate being written by the voter on the ballot-paper against the selected name or names.

7. The session of Parliament shall be from 1st August to 30th April, and there shall be at least one meeting a month at 3 P.M; ordinarily on the last but one Saturday in the month. The Parliament shall be dissolved at the end of three years, or earlier, on a change of Ministry, if desired by the incoming Leader.

8. The Committee, which met on January 17th and 31st, 1915, with other invited members who were unable to attend, shall have authority to call on two of its members to undertake severally the duties of the first speaker and the first Prime Minister, and also to invite the first 100 members for the purpose of starting the Parliament; these members should if possible, later seek confirmatory election from any one of the electorates mentioned in Rule 2. Failing this, they will remain members of the Parliament for one year only. The Committee shall continue to exist during the life time of the first Parliament to receive the recognition of any out-going Ministry, and to call on the leader of the successful party to form a new Ministry.

9. Every member before taking his seat shall hand in the certificate of his election on Form A, together with a written promise to the following effect:

I.....do promise, on my honour, that I will submit to the ruling of the speaker, and will obey the Rules of this House.

10. These rules shall be binding for the first 6 working months of the Parliament, on trial; at the end of that period the Prime Minister shall submit them to the judgement of the House, for confirmation or amendment, and they shall thereafter remain the Rules of the House until amendment by a Bill brought in for that purpose.

11. Strangers may be admitted, on cards signed by a member, to a place set apart for visitors, but may at any time, on the wish of a member, be requested to retire by the Speaker, and must then immediately withdraw. They may not interrupt proceedings, not audibly express either approval or dissent."

The Cabinet of the Madras Parliament was to consist of:-

The Prime Minister, The Secretary of the Local Government Board, The Secretary for Education, The Secretary for Industries, The Secretary for Commerce, The Secretary for Co-operation, and The Secretary for the Home Department".¹

The Modern Parliament was to be limited to 300 members.

The newspaper, 'New India' of February 15, 1915 informs, "on 14th February, 1915 Annie Besant was elected as the

1. Ibid. p.3.

Leader of the House by acclamation as being the fittest person from her experience of Parliamentary ways to guide the deliberations of the assembly at the beginning, so that it may start on a solid foundation."¹

The first meeting of the Modern Parliament was held on 6th March, 1915, afternoon at 3 P.M. The Prime Minister submitted the names of the ministers of this new institutions which were as follows:-

Prime Minister and Secretary of the Treasury:

Mrs. Annie Besant

Under Secretary of the Treasury: Mr. V.V. Srinivara Aiyengar

Secretary of Local Government Board: Mr. T. Rangachariar

Under Secretary of L.G.B.: Mr. K.C. Desikachariar

Secretary for Education: Mr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar

Under Secretary for Education: Mr. C. Jinarajadasa

Secretary for Industries: Mr. B.N. Sarma

Under Secretary for Industries: Mr. V. Ramesan Pantulu

Secretary for Commerce: Rao Sahib G. Subbiah Chetty

Under Secretary for Commerce: Mr. C. Copala Mennon

Secretary for Co-operation: Dewan Bahadur M. Adinarayana Iyiah

Under Secretary for Co-operation: Mr. V. Venkatasubhaiya

Secretary for Home Department: Dewan Bahadur L. A.
Govindaraghona Aiyar

Under Secretary for Home Department:

Mr. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

1. "New India", of February 15, 1915. p.7.

In the first meeting of the Madras Parliament the premier, Annie Besant, made a short statement on the business of the House and the policy of the Ministry. She declared that the procedure to be followed was to be in accordance with that adopted in the British House of Commons. After the first reading of the Bill had been carried in each case, the Right Hon. the Premier moved that the Bill on "Provincial Autonomy" be read second time on September 18th, "the Village Panchayats Bill" on July 24th, "Elementary Compulsory Education Bill" on April 17th, "Relation of Government to Industries Bill" on August 21st, "the Wharf Rent Bill on August 21st, "Bill to enable trustees to invest Trust Funds in Registered Co-operative Societies" on July 24th, and the Religious Endowment Bill on April 17th, 1915.

The Madras Parliament soon became a very interesting feature in the social and political circles of Madras society. On every Bill read in the Parliament a discussion by the supporters and opponents provided a valuable training not only to the members but also to the visitors of the Madras Parliament.

The Madras Parliament served the Madras society for many years. But it passed two very important Bills which pertain to education, not only of Madras but of the whole of India. On 17th April 1915 the Compulsory Elementary Education Bill was passed which became Act I of 1915 of Madras Parliament

Transactions, and on January 27th, 1917. The Religious Education Act was passed which was called Act I of 1917. Both these Acts, with the speeches of Secretary for Education, have been appended in the end of the dissertation to show that how greatly Annie Besant had influenced the people by providing a right kind of valuable parliamentary training to the people which helped in fighting for the cause of Indian freedom.

II - Establishment of Schools and Colleges designed to Combine the Best Elements of Western and Ancient Indian Cultures:

Annie Besant established many schools and colleges throughout India. All those institutions designed to combine the best elements of Western and Indian Cultures. We shall try to explain here Annie Besant's educational experiments which she made in the reform of Indian education.

1. The Central Hindu College, Benares. (1898):

When Annie Besant came to India in 1893, she seemed to have before her mind's eye a broad plan of India's renaissance. She first plunged into the task of the spiritual and religious revival of India, because she found that those who had modern education on Western lines were beginning to be materialistic and looked down upon their ancient Indian faith with contempt. They were being carried away from the glamour of Western civilization and culture. So everywhere Annie Besant awakened

awakened the people of India to the glory of their past heritage and splendour of their own ancient civilization and faith. In 1895 Annie Besant told the Indians: "Remember that these physical means of regeneration cannot succeed unless they flow down as the lowest manifestations of the spiritual ideal..... and the unifying of India must be founded on and permeated by a spiritual life, recognized as the supreme good, as the highest goal. Everything else is to subserve it..... If India could be respiritualized, then the nation as a whole, with her spiritual faculties, her intellectual powers, her ideally perfect social organization, would stand forth in the eyes of the world as the priest-people of Humanity".¹

After Annie Besant had succeeded in making thoughtful Indians again turn their minds to the truth of their ancient Philosophy, the truths embedded in their religious system, which she did with electrifying effect by lecturing over the length and breadth of India, she next turned her attention to the educational work for India.

At a time when Indian education was controlled by Government and foreign missionaries, where the main emphasis was to provide unpatriotic and irreligious education to the Indians which only manufactured mere clerks and administrative assistants, Annie Besant's bold pioneer effort to found 4

1. Annie Besant: The Means of India's Regeneration, pp.28-30.

schools and colleges, one after the other, paved the way for a new type of education which wedded the Western education with Eastern religion and Eastern ethics and thus she planned a systematic opening of the schools and colleges under the control of Indians.

Annie Besant had made a definite plan for national education in India. Nethercot writes: "while on her notable tour of northern India during the winter of 1896-97, she had broached her newest scheme to the wealthy and influential Hindus she met, chiefly at Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Lahore. Why not establish a college along completely new lines -- a college for Hindus only, based on Hindu traditions and culture? It would of course be directed at boys only, since the notion of co-education was still unheard of in the Orient..... As far the location of such a college, what place could be better than the holiest and eldest of all the old and holy Indian cities -- Benares..... By a lucky concatenation of circumstances, Benares also happened to be the city selected for the new headquarters of the Indian section of the Theosophical Society and the site Annie Besant had chosen for her own future home".¹

On the 7th of July 1898 the formal opening of Central Hindu College, Benares took place. Originally this college

1. Nethercot, Arthur H: "The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant", p. 62.

was supported only by local Hindus and some Theosophists and opened with three classes, from class IX to XI only, in a small house, lent by Babu Govinda Dass, in the midst of the Benares city. When this college was started, writes Annie Besant "we had no funds, no large influence. A few of us guaranteed some monthly subscription for 6 years, a few of us offered to teach so many hours a week for nothing; a few of us taught on a small allowance. Some boys came, and the C.H.C. was born in a little house in Kashi".¹

But the school did not stay long in the house of Babu Govinda Dass, His Highness the Maharaja of Benares, recognizing the value of the C.H.C. gave the land and a part of the buildings, where within a year the college was shifted. Subscriptions began to flow in when Annie Besant made an appeal to the Hindu Ruling Princes and the Patriotic Hindu Noblemen and Gentlemen of India. Many Princes of India became Patrons and Vice-Patrons of the C.H.C. Benares, and contributed lavishly for the restoration of this institution.

The need for opening the C.H.C. was felt when Annie Besant saw that the Government Colleges of that time did not provide any religious training and Sanskrit learning and literature was altogether discouraged, so to combine harmoniously the advantages of the Western Culture with all that was

1. Annie Besant: "The Ideals of Central Hindu College", an address published in the Central Hindu College Magazine, March 1st, 1907, p.59.

best and noblest in the East, this college was established.

As to why the college was called "Hindu" and not "Theosophical", Annie Besant said in her 1899 C.H.C. anniversary address, "This College is called a Hindu College, is it not rather Theosophical? Theosophy..... is the ancient teaching of the masters of Yoga. It is not to be put against Hinduism, or apart from Hinduism..... Theosophy is the root of all religions, the basis of all the teachings, and it unites them all..... But there are distinctively Hindu teachings, which differentiate Hinduism as a separate religion, and it is the inculcation of these which make the college distinctively Hindu".¹

But Babu Bhagwan Dass, who was the Hon. Secretary of the C.H.C. from its inception told somewhat different story about the name of this College, he wrote: "The educational effort, which ultimately resulted in the Central Hindu College was first intended to take shape as a Theosophical College. Only because a sufficient number of theosophists wearing the garments of other creeds were not available then, was it decided to begin with an institution which should rationalise, liberalise, and spiritualise at least Hinduism, and harmonise and solidarise the thousand-and-one divisions and sub-divisions of at least the Hindu Community. Later on, some definitely Theosophical schools and colleges for girls

1. Annie Besant: "Essentials of An Indian Education" being Dr. Annie Besant's Speeches in the Central Hindu College (1899-1912) pp.10-11.

and boys were developed by her in Benares and in the South".¹

In the C.H.C. the main object was to combine moral and religious training on ancient Aryan lines, with the secular education needed for University degrees and to impart a knowledge of Sanskrit, the classical language of India, in which were embodied all the ideals of the Hindu nature -- legal, social and spiritual.

Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College:

The eminent men from all parts of India formed the Board of Trustees of this College. This board had some English men, who were not orthodox Hindus. To Annie Besant for bringing the best secular education of the western type close to the best religious teaching of the eastern type, it was necessary that in the Board of Trustees "East and West should meet and join hands together as friends and co-labourers, as sympathisers and lovers one of the other".² The Board of Trustees was having the following members:

President: Annie Besant, Benares, Author

Vice-President: Upendra Nath Basu, Benares, Pleader

1. Hon.Mr. Justice Subramania Aier, Madras, Judge of High Court.

2. Sris Chander Bose, Benares, Mungiff.

3. Mahamahapadhyaya Pandit Adityaram Bhattacharya, Allahabad, Professor of Sanskrit, Muir College.

4. Gyandra Nath Chakravarti, Benares, Provincial Educational Service, N.W.P. & Oudh.

1. Bhagawan Dass: "Annie Besant and the changing world", pp.13-14

2. Essentials of An Indian Education, Op.cit., p.7.

5. Hon. Mr. Justice P.C. Chatterji, Lahore, Judge of High Court.
 6. Pandit Parmeshwari Dass, Bara Banki, Pleader.
 7. Hirendra Nath Datta, Calcutta, Attorney-at-law.
 8. Hon. Pandit Suraj Kaul, Lahore, Member of the Viceregal Council.
 9. Betram Keightley, Benares, Bar-at-law.
 10. Rai Baroda K. Lahiri, Ludhiana, Pleader of the Supreme Court, Punjab.
 11. Rai Pyari Lal, Delhi, Landlord, Retired Judge of the Court of Small Causes.
 12. Pandit Cheda Lal, Bareilly, Landholder, Retired Headmaster.
 13. The Hon. Sir Homesh Chandra Mitra, Kt. Calcutta, Zamindar, Retired Judge of the High Court.
 14. Rai Premada Das Mitra, Benares, Rais.
 15. Kumar Narindra Nath Mitra, Calcutta, Zamindar.
 16. Colonel H.S. Olcott, Madras, President Theosophical Society.
 17. Rai Bahadur Kumar Purmanand, Allahabad, Pleader.
 18. Ravi Shri Harisinghji Rupsinghji, Prince of Bhavanagar, C.I.
 19. Kumar Bharat Singh, Rais of Bara, Allahabad.
 20. Babu Indra Narain Sinha, Benares, Rais and Zamindar.
- Honorary Secretary: Babu Bhagavan Das, M.A., retired Deputy Collector, Benares.

The Teaching Staff of the C.H.C. in 1898

In 1898 the C.H.C. Benares was started with a very able staff. The Principal was Arthur Richardson, Ph.D., F.C.S., a

chemist, who had given up a good teaching position in England to take up the new post in India free of any remuneration. Two other persons also gave their services free -- one Mr. A.G. Watson, Assistant Engineer to work as Professor of Maths. and Babu Inder Narian Sinha, M.A., to work as Professor of Sanskrit and Philosophy. Dr. Richardson instructed the English classes himself beside teaching Physics and Chemistry.

The other teaching staff, all paid, was Babu Shyama Shankar Har Chowdry, B.A. -- Professor of History and Logic, Babu Romesh Dutt Panday, B.A. -- Assistant Professor of Hindu and Mathematics, Pandit Nityananda Panta, Vyakarna Charya -- First Sanskrit Teacher and Pandit Govinda Shastri -- Second Sanskrit Teacher.

The Scale of Fees prescribed in the C.H.C. in 1898:

The C.H.C. charged an infinitesimal tuition fee. The scale of fees prescribed for the college was as follows:

School Department

1st class	Rupee one
2nd class	Rupee one

College Department

1st year class	Rupees Two
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Annie Besant wanted to give cheap education. She wrote "Education should be brought within the reach of all, and it is the duty of the rich, the charitably disposed rich,

to bring this about..... We give our masters bare subsistence, just enabling them to maintain themselves. The sum is not to be regarded as connoting bad education, but a willing sacrifice on the part of the teacher, knowing that the learned man has the duty of imparting his learning to the ignorant, so that it is not merely a means of obtaining ease and luxury. If we had our will, not a single fee should be charged to any student. We would go back to the days of the ancient Hindu teacher. It was then the duty of the teacher not only to teach the boys, but to clothe and feed as well those who came to him praying for instruction..... If we find men of wealth in India willing to help us in order that this work may be done; if we find teachers who are willing to teach on a mere subsistence allowance --- we should be proud of them, benefactors and teachers alike, and look to the day when we shall have a free college in the old Aryan style".¹

Trends of Annie Besant's Thought towards C.H.C.:

As has already been explained that Annie Besant herself referred on many occasions to the trends of her thoughts which ultimately led to the establishment of the Central Hindu College. In one of her Central Hindu College Anniversary Addresses she made it clear that this institution was largely the history of the development of her own personality, which

1. 'Essentials of An Indian Education', Op.cit. pp.12-13.

was as varied as it was dynamic. When she arrived in India she found that Indians had totally forgotten about the grandeur and sublimity of India's ancient ideals. They were rapidly replacing the ancient values of Indian life with the westernized ideals and thoughts. She had learnt very much about the matchless civilization of India under H.P.B.'s influences and had read about ancient Indian religion and philosophy. When she met Indian theosophists like Bhagwan Dass, Prof. Chakravarti and others, she was drawn towards Hinduism.

It was but natural that all the earlier influences sought to find expression in her institution which best reflected the dynamic processes of her personality. Sir Ramaswami Aiyar writes that Annie Besant "insisted that education..... should be Indian in outlook and led by Indians. She counted herself as an Indian, and when she strove to lead because she felt she was an Indian in the past and will be an Indian in the future births".¹ She brought best traits of ancient Indian culture in the system of education of the C.H.C. which taught Indians to rever their past.

The second stream of thought also had an earlier origin, but it came to get an operative force some time during this period. As we have found in many of her writings, one thing which greatly pained her most was that Indian schools and colleges and even universities were the exact imitations

1. Aiyar, C.P. Ramaswami: "Dr. Besant as a Comrade and a Leader", p.5.

of the Western models, and that although India had her own glorious ancient culture but there was not a single institution in India where the mind of purely Indian ancient education could be found concentrated and seriously studied as it could be in the past in the ancient universities of Nalanda, Taxila etc. The ideal of the ancient Indian universities had greatly fascinated Annie Besant and she had a cherished desire of seeing the ancient ideals of education translated into practice in modern India. She said in one of the lectures "Having meanwhile studied Indian history and assimilated its lessons, we have resolved to revive the Ancient Ideals of Indian Education and Indian Culture, to teach our children in the Mother-tongue, to make Indian Ideals the basis of Indian Civilization, renouncing the hybrid and sterile ideals of anglicized - Indianism, and to adapt them to a new form, instinct with the Ancient Life, and moulding it into a glorious new body for the Ancient Spirit. India will then lead the world into a new Era of Literature and Beauty, Brotherhood and Peace".¹

Annie Besant's plan to found an institution into a centre of higher studies had long been exercising her mind as also evident from the writings when she had taught her Hall of Science classes in London and had been baulked in her attempt to get her degree at the University of London, she

1. Annie Besant: Indian Ideals in Education, Philosophy and Religion and Art", p.35.

had harboured the idea of some day starting a university of her own. Since she had come to India and seen the need, education had been almost an obsession with her. She strove to educate the Indians and especially the Hindus. In her lecture, which she delivered, on board the Kaiser-i-Hind in the Indian Ocean, November 6th, 1893, ten days before her actual arrival in India, she said: "When I think of India, I think of her in the greatness of her past, not in the degradation of her present. For today but few of her children know anything of her great philosophy..... The language of the Gods (Sanskrit) became a dead language, known only to the few. This literature passed out of the life of her people, and they grew downwards towards the lower philosophy and the lower faith they held. And when we look to her future it is in the inspiration of the past that we must seek it".¹ So it shows that Annie Besant had some definite educational plan before her to educate the Indians in the spirit of ancient Indian Culture.

The Central Hindu College had the following major aspects in its programme which were marked out:-

1. Directly dealing with the religious and moral training for the youth of India.
2. Inspiring them with good ideals, the shaping of noble

1. Annie Besant: "India, her Past and her Future", pp.38,57. This lecture given in a collected work "The Birth of New India".

character, the building up of citizens for the India of the days to come, the making of the possibility of a nation.

3. Trying to train boys and young men, in order that they may pass examinations, get degrees and fit themselves to make a livelihood in years to come.

4. Intellectual training..... strong brain, well-developed intellectual faculties give power of thought and work".¹

5. The boys..... to grow in love for the Motherland that gave them birth, for without love of country, without willingness to serve the Motherland, without understanding that the law of sacrifice is the law of life",² boys cannot become patriotic and able to offer their lives as a sacrifice on the alter of the Motherland.

The Activities of the Central Hindu College, Benares:

1. As a Centre of Hindu Culture: In the first anniversary of the Central Hindu College Annie Besant stated: "The field that we seek to occupy has been empty up to the present, it is a field which has been until now untilled. How often in the past years, from ruler after ruler, and Governor after Governor, has appeal been made to the Hindus of India to take their own religious teaching into their own hands, and

1. Annie Besant: "The Work of the C.H.C.", pp.231-32 from the Central Hindu College Magazine of June 1907.

2. "Essentials of An Indian Education", Op.cit., p.81.

not fall short of the first duty of the father and the teacher to train their sons in religion and morality. That appeal which came from Bengal, from Madras, from Bombay, from the Punjab, and from the rulers of our own Province, that appeal we have answered, and it is for that purpose that the Hindu College is here".¹

When regular teaching was started in the C.H.C. provision was made for the study of Hindu Religion and Philosophy, Hindu Logic, Sanskrit Literature, Sanskrit Grammar, Ancient and Modern History, English Literature and Criticism, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry but Biology was "omitted, so long as vivisectional experiments given in the text-books".²

In the C.H.C. the teaching of Sanskrit and English took a special consideration. An endeavour was made to establish Sanskrit and English as the two common languages of India; while the vernacular of the United Province was thoroughly taught, the study of Sanskrit was compulsory in the English department and the study of English was compulsory in the Sanskrit department.

Apart from these subjects a special study was made of Hindu religion. She wrote "In Religion, to teach all that is best in Hinduism on ancient but liberal lines -- including under the term "Hinduism" the religions originating from it, Jainism, Sikhism etc. -- to lay down broad religious lines

1. Ibid. pp.1-2.

2. Bhagawan Dass: Answers to "Note of Points to be considered by the University Commission" from the Managing Committee and Staff of the C.H.C. Benares, p.2.

for education on which all can agree, leaving aside all sectarian divisions and controversies; to build up character, making the students brave, faithful, patriotic, honourable, loyal, pious gentlemen".¹

The C.H.C. had a special arrangements of teaching the secular subjects with very high national ideals. Annie Besant wrote: In secular teaching, to utilize the best results of European experience, adaptable to Indian conditions; to promote sound education and discourage cramming; to give practical scientific training, and as soon as possible, technical instruction directed towards the revival of the declining industries and arts of India and the improvement of agriculture; to impart this education at the least possible cost to the students, so as to include in its scope the great members of the hereditarily poor but hereditarily educated class, now slipping into ignorance and consequent degradation, or else educated on purely Eastern lines, so that they are entirely out of sympathy with Western ideas, and consequently unable and unwilling to co-operate in the progress and integration of the Empire; to promote physical health and strength by thorough physical training by careful superintendence of morals, and the discouragement of early boy-marriages; to draw professors, masters and students together outside the

1. Memorial From the Board of Trustees, C.H.C. Benares on certain points in Report of the University Commission which affect the C.H.C. Benares, p.1.

class-room; and finally to turn out really competent young-men, fit for use in many walks of life, and not exhausted crammed examinations, crowding and learned professions and Government Services".¹

Besides a regular class work in the subjects mentioned above some extension lectures were also frequently managed on various aspects of Indian history, Culture and life either by the regular members of the staff or by invited great personalities. Annie Besant gave a number of talks to the students in the Central Hindu College Hall, which have since been published, giving the stories of Shri Ram Chandra and of Mahabhar-ta war. Even after making a lecture tour of India or any other country of the world Annie Besant used to redeliver her important lectures to her students of the C.H.C.² Moreover she extended her invitations to eminent foreign scholars and Government Celebrities. On February 20th, 1906 the Prince and Princess of Wales visited the Central Hindu College, the visits of Maharajas, Governors and men of positions were the daily feature for this institution.

1. Ibid. p.2.

2. This was confirmed by a meeting I had with Pandit Iqbal Narain Gurtu, a close associate of Annie Besant in her educational schemes, in his house in Rajghat, Benares on 17th July, 1965, a year before his death. I was introduced to Dr. Gurtu by Miss S. Telang, Principal Vasanta Degree College, Varanasi. Dr. Gurtu, who had worked for many years as Headmaster of C.H.C. School, told me that when ever Dr. Besant returned from her lecture tours, the students of the C.H.C. thronged the Shanti Kunja, the residential building of Annie Besant in Benares, with a request to deliver her widely acclaimed lectures again to them. Annie Besant

The composition of the staff and the students body representing different parts of India, as Annie Besant had desired, also served to bring out the intended all-India character of the institution. At the very inception of the Central Hindu College on 7th July, 1898, there were Indra Narain Sinha, a Pandit from Ghazipur who taught Sanskrit and Philosophy, Shyama Shankar Har Chowdry, a Behari who taught History and Logic, Romesh Dutt Panday, a Pandit from Mathila who taught Hindi and Mathematics. Pandit Nityanand Panta, a Brahmin from Benares who taught Sanskrit to the School classes. Later on when the college was shifted to its new building, which was a gift of the Raja of Benares, a number of teachers from different parts of India joined the institution in 1906-7 P.N. Patankar, a Maharastrian Brahmin taught Sanskrit, J.N. Unwalla, a Parsi gentleman from Ujjain, taught English, Bipin Behari Dass, a Bengalee taught also English. Sri Krishana Hari Harlekar, a Brahmin from Gujrat taught music. P.K. Telang, a Maharastrian taught ancient History and Religion. C.S. Trilokakar, also a Maharastrian taught Hinduism. B.Shiva Rao, a gentleman from Madras taught

Contd....from page 457.

generally agreed to the request and delivered her addresses in the Hall of the C.H.C. Dr. Curtu told me that the most amazing thing in her re-delivered lectures was that she never used any notes while delivering her lectures to so much correctness that she was exact even to her commas and full-stops.

Mathematics, P.K. Dutt, a Bengalee taught Physics, Kali Dass Manik, a Kaysth from U.P. was incharge of Physical education.

The student enrolment of the C.H.C. shows also that the composition of the students was fairly representative of the different parts of India. In one of her C.H.C. anniversary addresses Annie Besant said that in the C.H.C. the "students are comingfrom all parts of India, from Kashmir in the north to Madras in the south, from Assam in the East to Kathiawar in the West, but we need to attract far larger numbers from different parts..... so that our college may become a veritable India in miniature..... There can be no Indian nation until these provincial districts disappear, and they will disappear as youths from all provinces are thrown together, and in the friendships of school-days that are carried out into the world, in the intimacies of common life in class-room and playground forge links of union which shall endure through manhood, and form in time a golden network over India of old school fellows who shall clasp hands across the continent, and hold its many peoples as one brotherhood".¹

The gifts and donations that the C.H.C. received from time to time from persons all over India also testify to the esteem that this institution enjoyed on a national scale. The

1. Essentials of An Indian Education, Op.cit. p.41.

Central Hindu College was almost started with the donations of the people, not only of India but of the different countries of the world. Delivering her anniversary address Annie Besant said about the donations that "True, there has been no very large gift, no great donation has reached us. But from every part of India, from north and south, from east and west, small gifts pour in, in an unbroken stream, gifts from those who know how to give. For they give the love that doubles the money, and the blessing which comes with a gift from the heart".¹

In the year of the inception of the C.H.C. the Maharaja of Benares generously gave lands and buildings to the value of Rs.50,000, the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir gave a monthly subscription of Rs.600, Raja of Faridkote gave a monthly subscription of Rs.100; in addition to the financial help which flowed in from all sides, enabled the Board of Trustees of the C.H.C. to carry on its educational work and to build a palatial building for the College and the Boarding House, on which they had expended an additional Rs.80,000. Upto 1902, within $4\frac{1}{2}$ years of the existence of the C.H.C. three lakh of rupees had been contributed to the College by the public, and it had further an income independent of fees, of about Rs.2500 a month from subscriptions guaranteed for a

1. Essentials of An Indian Education, Op.cit. p.18.

number of years and some of them in perpetuity, and from an interest on deposited funds.¹

After 1898 Annie Besant occupied herself almost exclusively with the organizing, for the rapid and effective development, of the college. She formed a C.H.C. Committee in Burma in January of 1899 and organized the C.H.C. Committee in many towns and cities of India. In October, 1899, after her return from her lectures tour in Europe, Annie Besant pushed forward the plans for the C.H.C. In 1900 she devoted whole-heartedly her organizing talents to the building up of educational work. In 1901 she emphasized in her lectures the immense significance of Hinduism and as she went from town to town, she collected funds for the College and on her return, for the sake of the C.H.C., she spent long periods at Benares consolidating the work of the institution, of which she was "the life and the soul".

From 1902 onwards, every year for three months, Annie Besant began to make extended tours of India for pursuing her educational work. She travelled throughout India and impressed Hindus of all the strata of society. With her efforts and devotion to the cause of the C.H.C. many Maharajas and rich persons became the Patrons and Vice-Patrons of the C.H.C. The Patrons of the Board of Studies were the Maharajas of Benares, Jammu and Kashmir, Faridkot, Bhavnagar, and

1. Memorial From the Board of Trustees, C.H.C., Benares on Certain Points in the Report of the Universities Commission which affect the C.H.C., Benares, p.2.

Gaikwar of Baroda. The Vice-Patrons were the Maharaja of Darbhanga and Darbar Shri Bawawala of Vadia.

Annie Besant could not succeed in reaching at the target, planned by her, to get financial donations from the Hindu public for the C.H.C. In 1903 she tried to make a wide-spread effort to collect the 'small' sums which no Hindu was supposed to grudge, and for this she enlisted the services of a large army of workers. She wrote in her serialized column "In the crow's nest" of 1st November 1903 "The following three schemes will now be set on foot and I solicit for their working the aid of good Hindus all over the country; moreover boys are the very people to take part in these, and if they will help, we shall have a national movement in support of Hinduism. The First is The Snow Ball: A Sum of Annas eight is the basis of this scheme, and who will grudge Annas eight in support of Hinduism? One person begins by asking five of his friends each to give him As. eight for Hindu religious education, and each to collect from five other people As. eight a piece. The first five thus collect from twenty five people. Each of these twenty five, in giving his As. eight promises to collect from five others As. eight a piece. The Third set therefore numbers 125 people, and each of these, having given his As. eight, collects As. eight from five others, who in their turn repeat the same process, and so on and on. Each man or woman, boy or girl, on collecting the As. eight from five people, hands the Rs. 2/8 to the person to whom

he originally paid his own As. eight, and so it reached in time the starter of the snow-ball in the town. Each town should have its own snow-ball and the starter sends to Mr. Annie Besant, Benares city, the sum collected in his district. The name is taken from the fact that a little lump of snow, set rolling, gathers more and more snow as it rolls, till a large mass is formed. The Second scheme is The Collecting Box: We are going to have a number of small closed boxes made, bearing the name of the college, with a slit in the top through which money can be dropped in. These will be issued to responsible persons acting as head collectors, who will give a box into the charge of anyone willing to collect. When the box is full it will be handed to the Head Collector, who will open it, count the money and return it to the direct collector. The Head Collectors forward the money to Mrs. Annie Besant, Benares City. Such boxes may also be kept in houses and a few pice be dropped in from time to time by the family and by the visitors. The third scheme is:

The Rupee Fund: This we borrow from Aligarh, and surely Hindus will not be behind Muhammadans in helping their College. Any one who is willing to collect sums of one rupee writes to Mrs. Annie Besant, Benares city, for a receipt book, containing 50 receipts and asks all his friends and acquaintances for Re.1/- for Hindu religious education".¹

1. The Central Hindu College Magazine, November 1st, 1903, pp.269-70.

All these three schemes worked very efficiently and a good amount was collected. The progress of these schemes was reported in the columns of the Central Hindu College Magazine month by month in the section "How the Movement Goes".

As the C.H.C. aimed to deal with the religious and moral side of education of the children of Hindu parents. It had to forward a definite programme to bring up the Hindu children in their ancestral faith. Annie Besant firmly believed that "unless the children of Hindu parents are brought up in their ancestral faith, Hinduism will gradually perish before the assaults to which it is exposed on every side: and with the persisting of Hinduism, the glory of India will pass away for ever, and her existence as a nation will end. And unless the children of Hindu parents are brought up in their ancestral morality, the fate of India is sealed".¹

Annie Besant wrote an open letter to the Hindu ruling princes and noblemen and gentlemen of India pleading the case of the C.H.C. for getting some financial help to save the institution from the monetary problems. Her appeal got a good response and most of the Indian Hindu princes donated to the C.H.C.

In July 1906 Annie Besant formed a Deputation Committee of the C.H.C., based on the Duty Society of the M.A.O. College,

1. An Open letter to the Hindu Ruling Princes and the Patriotic Hindu Noblemen and Gentlemen of India, p.1.

Aligarh, to collect funds for the College. The office bearers of this Committee were:

President:	Prof. G.S. Arundale
Vice-President:	Prof. J.N. Unwalla
Hon. Secretaries:	Babu Dwarka Prasad Goel Babu Bimal Chandra Prasad
Hon. Treasurer:	Lal Krishan Lal

The Deputation Committee travelled throughout U.P., held lectures and collected funds for the College. Within a year this Committee collected the sum of Rs.7,000. During the Durga Puja holidays "the Deputation Committee visited Unnao, Cawnpore, Agra, Etah, Khurja, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Saharempore. Promises to the value of Rs.14,000 were secured together with Rs.5,000 in cash, so the work may be regarded as having been on the whole successful".¹ The similar visits were repeated in the following years and thus the financial position of the C.H.C. was secured.

2. As a Centre of All Round Education:

Here we shall try to consider those important activities through which the C.H.C. sought to continue to enrich the Central ideal of the institution of imparting an all-round education which Annie Besant wished to be provided at all costs. The College was named 'Central', because it was

1. Arundale, G.S: Ten years in the Central Hindu College, Benares, The Central Hindu College Magazine, August 1913, p.209.

at the outset hoped that the Benares College might serve as a centre around which throughout the length and breadth of the land, other Hindu Colleges might be grouped, so as to form a net-work of distribution points, through which the coming generations of Hindus might be educated on modern principles of training, with their hearts turned towards the ideals of their own religion.

(1) Academic Studies:

The Central Hindu College held two institutions in one -- the C.H.C. School and the Central Hindu College. This College was opened on 7th July, 1898 with one class, the 1st year, in the College Department, and with two classes in the School Department -- the Entrance (10th) and next lower (9th). On the 6th of August, 1898 the College was affiliated to the University of Allahabad upto the Intermediate Examination, and in March, 1899, the 2nd year class was added to the College Department, and the 8th and 7th classes to the school. In the same month the whole College was removed to the handsome building given as a gift by the Maharaja of Benares, to which many new class-rooms were added. In March 1901, the 5th and 6th classes were opened in the school Department, while in August, 1903, affiliation to the B.A. standard was voted by the Allahabad University Syndicate and the 3rd year class was accordingly opened. In 1906 M.A. class also began to function and the College began to enrol students of M.A.

in the subjects of English, Sanskrit, History, Philosophy and Mathematics.

The first principal of the College was Dr. Arthur Richardson and Headmaster of the School Department was Mr. Banbery. Dr. Richardson had distinguished himself in original research, had been trained in German laboratories and held a professorship of Chemistry. The College Department had a learned staff included James Scott, a Professor of English, Collins, a Junior Professor of English and two other Cambridge Englishmen one to teach Mathematics and the other Moral Philosophy. In 1904, a post of Vice-Principal was created to relieve Dr. Richardson of the work of attending to the organizing part of the life of the College. The first incumbent of the office of the Vice-Principal was Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Aditya Ram Bhattacharya M.A., fellow of the Allahabad University and formerly professor of Sanskrit at the Muir Central College, Allahabad. Pandit Aditya Ram joined very opportunely, for there had been much discussion as to the orthodoxy of the College, and his well known precision in religious matters inspired the general public with a confidence in the institution which at the time it badly needed because of the political situation arisen out of the division of Bengal.

With the inclusion, in the C.H.C. of the foreign highly educated teaching staff the educational standard of the students greatly improved, which was not otherwise possible with the Indian teaching staff. Moreover this had the desired

effect of bringing about efficient and methodical teaching and very satisfactory results in the University examinations. With the co-operative efforts of the European teaching staff and the Indian teaching staff a very healthy union of Hindu moral and religious training with Western secular education was made possible. The courses of the C.H.C. were varied and laid special stress on the unity of the different aspects of Hindu Culture and religion with a view to developing a harmonious mind.

The C.H.C. also emphasized the tutorial system in all the classes of the College. Speaking about the advantages of the tutorial systems as effectively employed in the C.H.C., Annie Besant said "The growing gulf noticeable in India between teachers and pupils has been bridged here by the instituting of the tutorial system, which gives to every boy a friend and counsellor in his professor, as well as an instructor. It is easy to imbibe boarders with the spirit of the place, but it is not so easy with day-boys, the tutorial system reaches these, and they are now grouped round the different professors, and we find that they come to their tutor, confiding to him their social, domestic, political difficulties, seeking his advice. The clashing of ideals of the young and old in this transition time may be much softened by the advice and sympathy of an outsider counsellor, able to see both sides and ties are growing up of love and friendship that will leave sweet

memories in later life".¹

The academic activities of the C.H.C. were almost thoroughly maintained on a fairly high level of efficiency. Annie Besant wrote: "If we differ from others in our intellectual methods, it is that we lay more stress on reasoning than on memory, and seek to evoke faculties rather than to cram the brain with facts. But we hold character as more precious than intellect, and service as nobler than success".² The teachers of the C.H.C. tried to inculcate higher ideals in the students. The special courses of the College, as distinguished from those prescribed by the Allahabad University (to which this College was affiliated) were always put much higher than that of an average school or College, and the personal testimonies of Dr. Bhagwan Dass, G.S.-Arundale, besides that of Annie Besant herself, that the students of the C.H.C. were introduced to apparently abstruse and difficult ideas supposed to be much above the reach of their age with surprising standard of success.

The Central Hindu College Library was also an important factor in the achievement of a high academic standard of the students. An exceptionally varied and rich collection of books and an easy access to it that it encouraged the voracious readers by providing a powerful incentive to the intellectual pursuits of the students and the teachers alike. The Central

1. Essentials of An Indian Education, Op.cit. pp.88-89.

2. Ibid. p.58.

Hindu College Magazine which was edited by Annie Besant had one section "Our Library Table" which gave the list of latest arrived books in the C.H.C. Library with very thought provoking reviews written by some able members of the staff. Many times Annie Besant herself reviewed the books. These reviews served as good incentives to the students for reading the library books. Moreover Annie Besant, herself, was fond of equipping the College library with up-to-date printed books, so whenever and wherever Annie Besant happened to go on a lecture tour, she used to bring many bundles of useful books, mostly from the European visits, for the College library.

The examination results of the C.H.C. students, which were, then also, regarded the measuring rod of an academic excellence, were by no means discouraging. Many students of this College secured positions in the Allahabad University and brought laurels to the College.

The time table for academic work was of very simple nature. In winter work of the College began at 10 A.M. and went on until 4 P.M. with half an hour's interval at 1 P.M. In summer, because of the great heat, the work began at the early hour of 6, until 10 O'Clock and that was done for the day.

(ii) Religious Education:

Religious education occupied a very important position in the C.H.C. This institution was established to give primarily moral and religious training in accordance with

Hindu Shastras. Annie Besant had a great regard for religious education. She took religion as "the expression of the seeking of God by man, of the One Self by the apparently separated Self". To her, she wrote "This expression has three divisions: One intellectual -- doctrines, dealing with God and man and their relations; one emotional -- worship, which has many diverse forms and rites and ceremonies; one practical -- living the life of love. Looking at religion under these three heads, it will be easier to see its place in the student's life, than if we take it more vaguely and generally".¹

When Annie Besant was hardly of 26 years she had written in 1873 one article entitled. "On the Religious Education of Children". In this article we find her views on religious education, she wrote: "Dogma, i.e., conviction petrified by authority, should be utterly excluded from the religious education of children; a few great axiomatic truths may be laid down, but even in these primary truths dogmatism should be avoided. The parents should always take care to make it apparent that he is standing his own convictions, but is not enforcing them on the child by his authority. So far as the child is capable of appreciating them, the reasons for the religious conviction should be presented along with the conviction itself. Thus the child will see, as he grows older, that religion cannot be learned by rote, that it is not shut up in a book, or contained

1. Annie Besant: "The Place of Religion in the Life of a Student", an article published in the Central Hindu College Magazine, 1st February, 1903, p.29.

in creeds; he will appreciate the all-important fact that free enquiry is the only air in which truth can breathe; that one man's faith cannot justly be imposed upon another, and that every individual soul has the privilege and the responsibility of forming his own religion, and must either hear God with his own ears, or else not hear Him at all".¹

To Annie Besant, true religion consists not only in feelings towards God, but also in duties towards man: She wrote "A morally good man, who does not believe in God at all, is in a far higher state of being than the man who believes in God and is selfish, cruel or unjust".² She could forgive any error in faith but she never forgave any error in life because it could prove fatal even. She was sure that a good man would surely see God, although, for a time his eyes be holden; the evil man, though he held the noblest faith, totally known to others, would never taste the joy of God, until he would turn from sin and struggle after holiness.

In the C.H.C. the students were taught by the teachers that there could be no division between true religion and noble living, so the religious education expressed itself in nobility of living exemplified by the lives of Annie Besant and many teachers of the C.H.C.

In the College religious teaching had a special place. Dr. G.S. Arundale informs that how the religious education

1. Annie Besant: "On the Religious Education of Children", Re-published in 'New India', February 2, 1907, p.2.

2. Ibid, p.2.

was given in that institution. He wrote: "A little before 10 (if it is to be the winter session) all the boys assemble in the big hall..... the Principal, Headmaster, and one or two professors enter and take their seats on the platform, the boys rising and remaining standing until the Principal is seated..... The half hour's religious instruction begins, and first one of the boys stands up and chants a hymn of praise. Then one of the Sanskrit Pandits recites a selected portion from the Bhagavad Gita, another Pandit gives a simple account of some part of Mahabharata or some other Indian book, and finally the Principal talks to the boys on the qualities they should endeavour to develop, and on their conduct during the school life".¹ This feature of the religious curriculum was regarded by Annie Besant as of greatest importance, for not only were the students thus receiving daily instruction in their own faith, but they began the day's work with their minds raised to the consideration of the principles which would guide their thoughts and actions throughout the student life.

At that time when Annie Besant introduced religious education in the C.H.C., her act was considered by most of the people to be 'foolish' and 'Utopian', but her lectures on the doctrines and ideals of religious education attracted many educated people towards her College. The orthodox Maharaja of Benares, to begin with the College, gave a free gift of a large

1. Arundale, G.S.: "The Central Hindu College" The Magazine of the College of the January 1904, noted this article, p.2.

portion of his extensive lands and buildings at Benares to the College, in addition to a large monetary grant. Within a small time the fame of the College spread all over India, Sanskrit, as a preliminary to understand Hindu religion, was made compulsory.

To make religious education a success Annie Besant published a series of Text-books on religion, one for the primary and lower classes of the School department, known as Sanatan Sharma Catechism, and another known as The Elementary Text-Book and another The Advanced Text-Book on Sanatan Dharma for the several sections of the higher classes of Schools and Colleges.

Explain the divisions of the Elementary Text-Book on religion Annie Besant wrote: "The Elementary Text-Book was published in the first day of March, 1903, and forms a nice and cheap little book. Part I expounds the Doctrines of Hinduism, and there are given clearly and simply, the main outline without details. Part II describes and explains Hindu ceremonies. Part II is devoted to Hindu ethics and consists largely of stories illustrating the virtues mentioned. Every chapter is followed by a Selection of Shlokas, in Sanskrit and English, giving in authoritative form, the teachings contained in the text".¹

Annie Besant published these books so as to spread religious and moral teaching through the length and breadth of the country and penetrate into the most out-of-the way

1. Annie Besant wrote in her serialized item "In the crow's Nest" of April 1st, 1903, p.80.

corners where otherwise religious education was not possible. These books were prescribed, immediately just after their publications, in all corners of India. The school, colleges and universities recommended them as a course of study of the Hindu religion. These text-books, though based on the principles of Sanatan-Dharma, were free from an communal touch.

Annie Besant's idea about religion was that a child was born in an environment best suited for its evolution, therefore it should be taught the religion of its own parents, then gradually the religion of his neighbours, thus to enable him to appreciate the universal character of religion and tolerate the religion of others. To her tolerance and consideration for other faiths were the basis of successful human existence. Besides teaching religion through the text-books, Annie Besant used to deliver lectures every evening on the sacred books of the Hindus.

In the Boarding house a learned Pandit was appointed to conduct the various prayers morning and evening according to the family traditions of the boarders. The prayer had two main divisions, the "Vedic Sandhya" and the "Tantric Sandhya". Vedic Sandhya was meant for boys wearing the sacred thread and Tantric Sandhya was meant for others.

(iii) Aesthetic Education :

In the C.H.C. there was no special arrangement for the teaching of the subjects which cover aesthetic branch of knowledge. Though Annie Besant was greatly interested in the

teaching of art, but she considered the religious education more useful than the education of art. Annie Besant had a very clear conception of art before her. She fully believed that "art plays its part in the shaping of the nation's growth. The Art of a nation is the expression of that nation's conception of the Beautiful, of its love of harmony, proportion and order".¹

She wanted to introduce many art subjects in the curriculum of the C.H.C., but because she became the President of the Theosophical Society, which was an international organization, so she had to shift her residence from Benares to Madras and thus most of her schemes remained on paper only.

Annie Besant was very much interested in painting and music and wanted to introduce both these subjects in her College. She had started elementary classes of drawing and painting in the College with the intentions, to use her own words, "to gradually raise the people who live there to its own level, so that the beautiful thing is not only to be admired, but it is to be lived upto".²

She had a wish to introduce music in the curriculum of the C.H.C. Annie Besant was a good musician herself and had attended the music classes of marvellously able teacher Mr. John Farmer, the musical director of Harrow School, when she was 16 years of age. In 1901, when Annie Besant was in Lahore, she met a Brahmin singer, Vishnu Digamber who had a real genius for music

1. Annie Besant: "The Necessity of Religious Education, the article noted in the book "The Birth of New India", p.130.

2. Annie Besant: "Speciality of Indian Art", from New India, February 23, 1916, p.3.

and also he was interested in teaching music to others. Annie Besant was very much impressed by his performance and that of his pupils. She wrote about Vishnu Digambar that "He has trained two or three other Brahmins to help him and they play and sing together in a style rarely heard. He has established a class for boys and men, which has only been under instructions for three months, and the results are rarely marvellous. They sing with precision and with great accuracy of time and tune, showing most careful and masterly training. I wish we could have such a class in our C.H. College, with Pandit Vishnu Digambar as Professor"¹. But the wish of Annie Besant remained unfulfilled as she could not introduce the subject of music in her College.

(iv) Physical Education:

In many of her writings of 1893-1914 when she came to India and the time she handed over her C.H.C. to the board of trustees of the Benares Hindu University, Annie Besant had greatly emphasized the importance of physical training in an ideal educational system. Her all lectures and pamphlets which had some place of education in them spoke specially for the utility of Physical education. In her lecture "Education As a National Duty" delivered in Bombay on March 9th, 1903, she said "The training of the boy's body is important..... His body should be kept frugally and simply, so that he may be strong and

1. Annie Besant: In the Crow's Nest of October 1, 1904, p.256.

healthy, and not indolent and lazy. He should be trained in gymnastic exercises and in games of every kind. He should be trained to regard his body as an instrument for working in the world..... No school, no college does its duty where physical training is not definitely a part of its curriculum. The physical training does not really stop with the body..... games develop the qualities..... quickness in understanding of thought, alertness in understanding the situation, swiftness of decision, promptness of action and accuracy of judgement".¹

In the C.H.C. physical exercises were a very important part of curriculum. The important physical activities introduced in the College were games, drill, Indian exercises and scientific physical exercises. For all kinds of physical education Babu Kali Das Manik was the incharge of the whole institution. Among many signs of his activity, he had introduced the following physical activities in the students of the C.H.C.

- (1) Flag drill, (2) Lantern drill for evening entertainment,
- (3) Indian Club Exercises with Indian Music Accompaniment,
- (4) The C.H.C. Cadet Corps, organized in 1906 on the occasion of the visit to the College of the Prince and Princess of Wales, (5) Guard of Honour, (6) C.H.C. Scouts, modelled on the lines of the famous Boys' Scouts of General Baden Powell,
- (7) Swimming (8) Indigenous exercises devised by Ramamurti and (9) Games --

1. Annie Besant: "Education as a National Duty", this lecture compiled in the book "Birth of New India", pp.95-96.

(v) Some special activities of the C.H.C.:

The Central Hindu College had some special activities which brought it to the fore-front, within few years, in the famous colleges of India. The important and significant activities are explained as follows:-

(a) C.H.C. Parliament: On the design of Mock Parliament of the Fabian Society and the Madras Parliament Annie Besant had introduced an activity in the C.H.C. known as the C.H.C. Parliament. George S. Arundale wrote in his article entitled "Ten years in the C.H.C., Benares" that "Our School Parliament came into existence during the course of the winter months (of 1906) and it has not only proved a most useful institution in the training of our young men, but it has also been copied by many schools in various parts of India. The object of the parliament was 'to teach the forms and procedure in which public meetings, committees, boards etc. are carried on, and to foster business-like and terse speech, and orderly submission to the rules of debate'.¹

Annie Besant determined to introduce a House of Commons, idealized into the C.H.C. The idea was enthusiastically received both by staff students of the C.H.C., and their spare time was occupied in reading up with minute care the forms and rules adopted by their "colleagues" of the real British House of Commons. In the C.H.C. Parliament two subjects were however

1- Arundale, George S: "Ten Years in the C.H.C. Benares", a serialized article contributed to the C.H.C. Magazine of August 1913, p.208.

barred: (i) Current politics, and (ii) questions from honourable members regarding the interval discipline of the C.H.C. and C.H.C. School. Within these limitations they were free to do practically what they liked.

In the C.H.C. Parliament the first speaker was Pandit Iqbal Narain Gurtu M.A., LL.B., who had been selected for his office by many subsequent C.H.C. Parliaments, while George S. Arundale became the first Prime Minister, combining with it the post of President of the Board of Education. The Leader of the opposition was Babu Shyam Sundar Das, B.A., the Assistant Head Master of the C.H.C. School. The first cabinet was very strong one formed among the members of the staff and promising students. They also appointed as whips some influential students, so that there might be the necessary inducement to honourable members to support their parties in times of crisis.

Soon Arundale cabinet fall and was succeeded by a Shyam Sunder Das Ministry. Annie Besant sent the message of her admiration at the time of the introduction of the C.H.C. Parliament in the College. She had written "I confidently believe that the training our students will receive, the information they will acquire, the practice in debating they will gain, and the self-restraint and most careful politeness they will be forced to observe, will be of inestimable value to them in after life; and, as members of the staff take part in the proceedings and help the students in the duties they have to

perform, it is to be expected that the interest may be sustained and attendance of every student automatically ensured by the fact that he will feel it his duty to support his chief".¹

This parliament continued to function upto the time the C.H.C. had been handed over to the Benares Hindu University in 1914. Annie Besant took a very keen interest in the work of this parliament. Sri Prakasa wrote in his book on Annie Besant: "She was scrupulously respectful to the president whoever he might be. At a meeting of the mock Parliament of the Central Hindu College, she had been invited to speak from one side. Ganga Shankar Misra, a brilliant student of the time, was in the chair; and as she entered she bowed very gracefully and almost too respectfully to the student-president (the 'speaker') much to his embarrassment: and took the seat which he pointed out to her".²

This shows that Annie Besant took the working of the mock Parliament to be followed with full devotion. Her principle of life was: "Whatever has to be done should be done well".

It would be interesting here to note the proceeding of one day's working of the C.H.C. Parliament recorded in the C.H.C. Magazine of January 1913. Annie Besant wrote: "The C.H.C. Parliament held a sitting from 1 to 3, and a Bill

1. Annie Besant: "The Training home for students", a speech given in C.H.C. Magazine, November 1, 1906, p.289.

2. Prakasa, Sri: "Annie Besant: As Woman and As Leader", p.123.

for the Prevention and Regulation for Mendicancy in India was moved by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sankar Saran. The chief business was a discussion of the harmfulness or Value of Religious Education. The following resolution was moved by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Prakash N. Sapru, the Prime Minister, and seconded by the Rt. Hon. T. N. Muttoo, the Minister for Education.

"This House is of opinion that the growth of character -- the object of all true education -- depends upon environment and imitation rather than upon the inculcation given in Indian Schools and Colleges.

"That this House regarding religion as a disruptive force in national life emphatically demands that Religious Education shall be kept apart from all instruction given in Indian schools and colleges.

"The Leader of the Opposition, the Rt. Hon. Mr. Apurva K. Chandra Chowdry, moved the following amendment, which was seconded by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Chandra Bhal:

"That inasmuch as this House is of opinion that no person can adequately serve his Motherland unless his character has been moulded in accordance with the principles of the faith of his people, the Government is called to establish religious education side by side with ordinary secular instruction, and to provide students belonging to different religious with such religious instruction in their respective faiths as may be acceptable to the various leaders of religious thought.

"The Prime Minister made a very able speech in moving his resolution, and the other speeches were also very good.

"The amendment was carried by 103 votes to 25".¹

(b) The C.H.C. Boarders' Union Club:

On the 19th of July, 1900 this club was formed by the Boarders of the C.H.C. with the following objects:-

1. To promote study of English literature by writing essays and giving speeches on subjects previously fixed.

2. To educate and evolve the powers of thought and discussion.

3. To improve the moral character of the members by practising the virtues discussed in its meetings.

4. To cultivate brotherly feelings and produce the spirit of tolerance amongst the members.

All the Boarders were the members of this club. The meetings of this club were held on every Sunday at 1 P.M. Recitation of selected passages from the Bhagavad-Gita, the Ramayana or the Mahabharata preceded the regular work of the club, which had drawn up a set of rules for conducting business. The proceedings of the meetings were recorded in details.

The superintendent of the Boarding House acted as the ex-officio President of the club. The Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Librarian and Treasurer were

1. Annie Besant: "In the Crow's Nest", in the Central Hindu College Magazine, 1st January, 1913, p.3.

elected from among the members.

In December, 1900 only two meetings of the Boarders' Union club were held in which subjects discussed were "cleanliness" and "Truth". On 1st January 1901 the following subjects were taken up by the Boarders' Union club: (1) Young India, (2) Town and country Life, (3) The Material and Intellectual Prosperity of India since the advent of the British Rule, (4) Reforms needed for the Boarders.

In 1902 some important subjects for discussion were (1) Influence of the West upon the East, (2) India past and present, (3) Durga Puja, (4) The Value of Discipline (5) What India expects of her sons, (6) Benefits of Commerce and (7) Habits.

(c) The Students' Debating Society:

This society was started at a meeting of the students of the C.H.C. on the 3rd January 1901. Dr. Richardson, the Principal, was unanimously elected President; Baby Shyam Sunder Dass, Vice-President; Jyotish Chandra Choudhuri, a student of the first year class, Assistant Secretary.

The main object of the society was "to improve its members in the art of public speaking; to further their social, moral, physical and intellectual as well as spiritual progress; to bring into practice help and compassion to all fellow creatures".¹

(d) The C.H.C. Museum:

With the help of students and the members of the staff a Museum was formed in the College to which students, staff

1. Annie Besant: "The Students Debating Society", 1st Feb. 1901, issue of the C.H.C. Magazine, p.55.

and the lovers of the C.H.C. freely and lavishly contributed to the Museum.

(e) Vidyarthi Sahayak Sabha:

In November 1904 the students of the C.H.C. established the Vidyarthi Sahayak Sabha. Its formation was a clear indication that the lessons of spiritual unity and of common interest were beginning to bear fruit in the lives of the students of the C.H.C. In this Sabha the members planned to help the poorer students among them with books and clothes, and turning right teaching into right living.

(f) The C.H.C. Teachers' Union:

The C.H.C. Teachers established a Union for mutual help and for the stimulation of moral, social, intellectual and physical improvement by closer intercourse among themselves. With this Union the harmony of the College grew and that institution became an organized body for the expression of great ideal, for which Annie Besant had toiled.

(g) The Central Hindu College Magazine:

It was primarily known as The Arya Bala Bodhini, which was the first organ of the Theosophical Society and was started in 1895 but afterwards it was named as the C.H.C. Magazine and was taken by Annie Besant, who edited it from 1901-1914. This magazine was not only popular at home but abroad as well; and every educational institution bought and circulated to its members of the staff with a particular interest.

Out of the profits of this magazine, a number of scholarship were given to the poor and deserving Hindu students.

After Annie Besant accepted the responsibility of editing the Magazine, she paid a glowing tribute to Col. Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society and the editor of The Arya Bala Bodhini in the columns of the C.H.C. magazine. She wrote: "For six years the Arya Bala Bodhini or Hindu Boys Journal has been growing under the fostering care of Col. Olcott, the President-founder of Theosophical Society, and has been doing good service, as a factor in the great revival of spirituality which is going on in India. Col. Olcott thinks that the time has come for him to hand over the magazine to some representative of Hinduism and he offered it work of that college for Hindu youth. The managing committee have with pleasure accepted the responsibility of bringing out the magazine in future and have changed the name of the C.H.C. Magazine. They hope as time goes on, to make it a really valuable boy's Journal, which will be widely read in all parts of the land....."¹

After taking the editorship of the magazine Annie Besant devoted herself for improving the magazine to a very great extent. She introduced in it different sections of permanent basis e.g., the magazine opened with "In the crows nest", under this head all types of editorial comments, monthly activities

1. Annie Besant: "The Central Hindu College Magazine", 1st January 1901, p.2.

of the College and some information about the educational movements taking place in all over the world and especially in India, were published: The next popular section was "Science Jottings" under this head all popular science news were given. It was a thought provoking section which gave scientific understanding to the students and the general public. There were articles of varied interest in one section called "Our letter Box". This section dealt usually with contributions in literature, Arts, Social Science, e.g., short essays on the festivals of India, historical places of India etc. The religious section contained articles on subjects like "Indian Heroes", in "defence of Hinduism" etc. The last section of the C.H.C. Magazine dealt with "How the Movement Goes" under this head a brief monthly summary of the working of the C.H.C. was recorded and it also noted the latest developments in the C.H.C.

(vi) Ideals and Methods of the C.H.C.:

Annie Besant tried to establish in India a new spirit in Indian Education when she founded the C.H.C. at Benares in 1898. She was the heart and soul of the great institution and the annual reports, published in one book entitled 'Essentials of An Indian Education', reveal clearly how she was able to make her policy more and more practical and effective, year by year, until the C.H.C. became famous throughout India as a seat of learning and culture.

The basic method which Annie Besant wanted to be followed in the C.H.C. was "to wed the best secular education of the western type to the best religious teaching of the eastern type". She was confident that for doing that effectively it was very essential that in the College staff, Eastern and Western educated people should meet and join hands together as friends as co-labourers, as sympathisers and lovers of each other in the service of education of the people.

Annie Besant dreamt that through the C.H.C., two great nations of the world -- one, Indian, hoary with antiquity and marvellous culture, and the other, British, bubbling with the scientific knowledge and vigour of youth -- may meet in more friendly co-operation than they had even done so.

Annie Besant did not like to see her students taking part in the active politics of the country. She wanted to see the students receiving their education freely. She wrote "I object to boys being thrown into political conflicts. They may ruin their whole lives in a sudden surge of excitement, and in their manhood bitterly reproach those who took advantage of their inexperience A boy dismissed from school or college and refused a leaving certificate, has his education ruined and his future livelihood destroyed".¹

Annie Besant wanted the students of the C.H.C. to be good students. She wanted them to be reasonably successful in

1. "Annie Besant: Builder of New India", p.155.

their examinations though she was well aware of the utter futility of examinations. In her 1899 Anniversary address she said "I fought.....against the system of continual public examinations imposed upon young boys, making it absolutely necessary for teachers to cram them if they were to look for success in the examination. They must learn to repeat by rote the facts demanded, instead of being taught in a way that may influence the mind and heart..... Every boy here, however, must pass through the examination mill, and must be trained on the most mechanical system. We do not approve of chasing boys through a number of books so large that they cannot master them in the time allowed. Far better that they should read a couple of valuable books thoroughly and intelligently, that their reason should be aroused, their intelligence stimulated and trained, than that they should be rushed through half a dozen or more different books, a premium being put, under the rules, upon a successful system of cram".¹

Annie Besant wanted to see her students to be good at sports of all kinds. But above all, she wanted them to be gentlemen in the finest sense of the word. To this end she directed all her energies and available time, for even when she gave lectures, she never omitted to apply the theme as it might be developing in any particular address to the unfordment of character, to the intensifying of the gentlemanly

1. "Essentials of An Indian Education", Op.cit. p.5.

spirit, to the stimulation of good manners. She wanted discipline to be self-discipline with no element of coercion in it. She wanted that the whole Indian nation may join hands to build good character of the children. She said "Let them do well in college and school, in examinations, the playgrounds, in town and in home. Let their character stand well in the public eye; let them never be seen in improper discreditable. Let them be honourable, upright, and gentle, and we know that our rulers will look on them with approval. Some slight mistakes on our part, due entirely to ignorance, at the beginning of our work, seemed to justify the Government doubt of our emotions, but the effect of these mistakes will be removed if we show good work".¹

Further, Annie Besant wanted to provide that education which may be all-round in character covering the whole development of a man. She was very much critical to the present education because "Under the present system, the memory of the boy is over-burdened with the undigested facts, and the other mental faculties are left untrained, so that they leave College unprepared for the practical duties of life".² So she recommended that the minds of the boys need to be exercised along a different line. She suggested that "more educated men should find a beneficial use to which they can turn themselves in promoting the manufacturing industries and the commerce of their industry".³

1. ~~Essentials of an Inst~~ Ibid. pp.22-23.

2. Ibid. p.31.

3. Ibid. p.31.

In the C.H.C. Annie Besant had introduced Technical education because she felt the needs for Technical subjects more than for secular subjects. She wrote "A promising scheme has been set on foot..... to open a workshop at Benares, "to be the nucleus of a technical college connected with the Central Hindu College" and have received promises of work from the College and from the Indian Section, Theosophical Headquarters. They will open at first three departments -- blacksmith, carpenter and bicycle repair....."3 She also made arrangements of teaching of commerce in the College, so that the students may not only run towards government employment and the learned professions but start their own business and factories independently.

(vii) Annie Besant's Work in the C.H.C.:

The Maharaja of Benares delivering his address at the Anniversary Meeting of the C.H.C. paid a tribute to Annie Besant by saying "In order to benefit the Hindus at large, and to leaven the purely material education of the present day with some of the high ideals of Hindu religion and ethics, this noble and venerable lady (Annie Besant) established this college in this holy city, so that it may bring forth students fully versed in worldly lore, and infused with those high ideals of religion and ethics without which man is little better than a beast..... This college is.....

1. Maharaja of Benares: 'Anniversary Meeting of the C.H.C.,' given in the C.H.C. Magazine of 1st January, 1913, p.25.

the outcome of the disinterested expression of the pious lady, Mrs. Besant, to whom the Hindu public ought to ever remain indebted for the boon she has conferred upon them by this means".¹

Annie Besant framed and guided the policy of the C.H.C. in consultation with her colleagues and the members of the Hindu community. She tried to mix up with the students so as to win their hearts. Her example was followed by the teachers and the atmosphere of a well-knit family life prevailed in the C.H.C. To make the C.H.C. a true family was not an easy task. To this institution came students from all parts of India and naturally they were supposed to have brought with them the ideas and views which at that time were current in their respective home provinces. There had always been a very curious mixture of students in the C.H.C. many having widely different views on all matters -- social, political, religious and cultural -- but Annie Besant united them and brought them very close to each other with the greatest ease by her exemplary behaviour, sympathetic treatment, active tactfulness and impartial patience.

(viii) C.H.C., to the Benares Hindu University:

The C.H.C. was a definite factor, in the mind of its founders in a great scheme of National education. It was intended through the C.H.C. that Indians were capable of

1. Maharaja of Benares: 'Anniversary Meeting of the C.H.C.', given in the C.H.C. Magazine of 1st January, 1913, p.25.

initiating and supporting such a scheme; it was held that the parents of Young India knew much better than any Government, however, beneficent could know, what was necessary for the improvement and growth of India; that they felt where they themselves were deficient, that they knew where talent should be applied to increase Indian prosperity; that they could work out the training which would develop young men into responsible citizens of a free nation; that they loved their motherland as no foreign nation could love; and that an eager patriotism, a spirit of self-sacrifice for the nation, of devotion to the motherland, could only be implanted and grown into the hearts of youths, who felt themselves to be surrounded and nourished by the patriotism, devotion and self-sacrifice of the elders of their own people.

Annie Besant wrote "Let an Englishman imagine what Eton and Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge would be, if they were held and administered by German; would they be nurseries of English heroism, of English patriotism? Would English boys brought up on German History, or biographies of German heroes, on the lines of Blucher and Bismark, become the Englishmen who carry the English Flag to every quarter of the Globe? Let them realize now what Indians feel, who have behind them a civilization of thousands of years, and whose sons are now brought up on lines which make them regard their fore-fathers -- who produced the 'Upanishets',

the 'Mahabharata', the dramas of Kalidas, the commentaries of Shankaracharya, Ramaniya and Madhva, the devotion of Tukaram, Kabir and Guru Nanak, the valour of Pratap Singh, the statesmanship of Akbar -- as a crowd of superstitious dreamers and unpractical visionaries, while they are taught to look at Nelson and Wellington as heroes, and to regard important Indian history as beginning with Clive and Warren Hastings".¹

Annie Besant with a small band of devoted Hindus had founded and maintained the Central Hindu College and High School, with the object of creating a National Institution, in which the Hindu religion should be systematically taught, in which character should be built on Hindu lines, in which should have patriotic devotion to the Motherland, and which should be controlled by Hindus independently of Government authority. While it was necessary to accept the educational curriculum of the Government, and to conform to its general rules as regard the educational arrangements, the C.H.C. preserved its independence by taking no Government grant, and no rupee from Government coffers had ever been accepted by it. It had depended wholly on voluntary contributories from the public, and these were obtained on the distinct understanding that the Institution was under Hindu control, and that the Government had no hand, no voice, in its manage-

1. Annie Besant: 'The crisis in National Education: Shall the C.H.C. cease to be a National Institution', p.11.

ment. On these lines it was founded and had been maintained.

But a most serious crisis arose in the life of the C.H.C., Benares when the scheme of Hindu University, Benares was conceived by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. After much discussion it was decided by the Trustees of the C.H.C. that they were willing to take part in realizing the ideal of Pandit Malaviya and would surrender the C.H.C. to the new University to be the nucleus of that University.

A Hindu University Committee was formed with the high ideal of inspiring Hindu culture in the new national Institution under Hindu control, and the leaders of Hindu thought, throughout the country, became members of the Committee and a draft constitution was submitted to the Government, which, while inviting the Viceroy to be the Chancellor of the Hindu University and giving him a Veto on many important matters, yet left the effective control in the hands of a court and of Governors, who should be elected, in various ways, by the Hindu community, securing Hindu control.

But the first blow was struck when the Government appointed the Lieutenant-Governor of U.P. as Chancellor having sweeping powers of appointment and removing members of the staff, sending inspectors and appointing examiners. In fact he was created the master of the internal arrangement of the new University. To this arrangement Annie Besant protested and refused to give the C.H.C. to the new University to become the nucleus of it.

But the Hindus wanted a university on all costs, which may be known as the Hindu University. Annie Besant's own associates separated from her on this issue that wanted that C.H.C. must go to form the nucleus of the new Hindu University, under the guidance of new authorities of the universities. Dr. Bhagawan Dass a very close friend and a colleague of Annie Besant in educational and philosophical issues wrote against Annie Besant. He said "Like every human being Mrs. Besant has two natures, a higher and a lower. Because of her extraordinary gifts and powers, the manifestation of these two in her are also extraordinary. Because of the high level of her intellectual development, they work in a correspondingly subtle and sublimated form. In her case, these two time - old natures, altruism and egoism, have taken on the particular forms of (1) the wish 'to save' mankind, and (2) the wish 'to be regarded as a Saviour' of the same"¹. Similar criticism was levelled against Annie Besant by other members Board of Trustees of the C.H.C. as they wanted that the Hindu University must begin with the C.H.C. as a nucleus of it. We leave the story here as we are least concerned with the history of the inception of the Benares Hindu University. Suffice is to say here that Annie Besant was forced to part with, her own

1. Bhagawan Dass: "The Central Hindu College and Mrs. Besant", p. 1.

reared, the C.H.C. with great reluctance and against her wishes. But the Central Hindu College did not move at once from the old quarters.

At the 16th anniversary of the C.H.C. Benares which was held on 6th March, 1915, the Maharaja of Durbhanga while praising the role of Annie Besant in her devotion to the cause of education of the Hindus, he said "Mrs. Annie Besant was the life and soul of the movement, and I am sure I am voicing the sentiments of one and all when I say that it is her indefatigable exertions, guided by the unique tact and talent with which she is gifted that the fruition of the scheme is mainly due. The Hindu community will never forget the debt it owes to her on account of her services to the Hindu College".¹

2. The Central Hindu Girls' School, Benares: (1905)

Ever since her arrival in India in 1893 Annie Besant had been profoundly convinced that in the right education of women on the lines of pure Hinduism lay the real power which would hasten the task of India's uplift and regeneration by centuries. She wrote "One of the first things done by Countess Wachtmeister and myself..... was to concern ourselves with the question of the education of girls. But many thoughtful Indians begged us to wait until we had

1. Maharaja of Durbhanga: "Address delivered on 6th March, 1915 at the 16th Anniversary of the C.H.C.", noted in 'New India', of March 12, 1915, p. 12.

secured the confidence of the Hindu Community, so that no suspicion could arise with regard to our objects..... The advice seemed sound and we accepted it".¹

After few years Annie Besant made an effort, first at Lahore, to start a Girls' School but due to paucity of well trained and able teachers her proposed project could not mature. But Miss Francesea Arundale, aunt of Prof. G.S. Arundale came to India in 1903 and approached Annie Besant with a suggestion to start a Girls' School, as a branch to the C.H.C. Miss Arundale had started, in August 1903, in her own home a small Girls' school taking ten girls of the neighbouring compounds as her students. This school began with two girls on the first day and gradually increasing in number upto ten girls, attending more or less regularly. Her rooms could not, by any self-sacrifice or ingenuity, be made to hold more and also she felt the necessity for a building.

Annie Besant had also felt the need for such a school. By establishing and organizing the C.H.C. very efficiently for five years she had won the confidence of the Hindu public through her straight-forward actions and pure aims of education of the Hindus. She determined to call upon all Hindus, with whom she was in direct contact to concentrate their efforts upon the movement of the education of Hindu girls. She was confident, she wrote "never will India take her right

1. Annie Besant: "The Education of Indian Girls", p.1.

place among the nations of the world, unless the mothers on whose knees the little ones grow up, the mothers of her sons, are given an education which helps to produce noble and splendid woman. Until they are educated on lines that will make them again the light of the home, the Goddess of the household, queen over men, hearts, aiding their husbands and sons to serve their country, how can they expect that India can rise?"¹

Annie Besant addressed a note to certain well known people, interested in the education of Indian girls, to call a meeting at Guana Gaha, Benares, on 29th March, 1904, to consider the scheme for a girls' school.

At the same time a circular letter was sent, to the branches of the Theosophical Society all over India, by Annie Besant, together with her Pamphlet on "The Education of Indian Girls", which sufficiently explained the kind of education aimed at.

The circular letter gave an insight into Annie Besant's scheme of Indian education. She wrote in the letter, "A Provincial Committee consisting of members of the C.H.C. Board of Trustees and others has been formed at Benares with the object of extending to girls the educational advantages within the limit of their own religion hitherto restricted to boys..... with Miss Arundale as Principal, and

1. "Essentials of An Indian Education", Op.cit. p.46.

under the direct supervision of myself.... My object in writing to you.... is.... to urgently ask its assistance in the work of female education. The ordinary English or Missionary, education, given to girls, is destructive to all Hindu ideals and of the sanctity of the Hindu home. The most religious Hindus therefore rightly guard their wives and daughters from its influence. Only the Theosophical Society can take up this question successfully all over the country, and I suggest that every branch should endeavour to found a Girls' school, conducted on the lines laid down, and thus give to girls education suited to their future, and permeated with religious ideas. These schools can be affiliated to the Central Hindu Girls' School in Benares, and a national movement will thus be initiated. The time is ripe for such action, and the Branches must rise to a sense of their duty to India's daughters".¹

The meeting of 29th March, 1904 resolved itself into a Managing Committee with Annie Besant as Chairman, and Miss Arundale as Vice-Chairman and the Principal. A School-house was planned and built on land lent for the purpose by the Board of Trustees of the C.H.C. This was consecrated and opened on March 8th, 1905 and classes were held regularly with Miss Arundale as Honourary Principal and Miss Palmer to help her and several Indian ladies as teachers.

1. Annie Besant: "Circular letter to the T.S. Branches", given in the First Annual Report of the C.H.C. Girls School, 1905, p.ii.

Annie Besant wrote articles in different papers of India and Europe asking for funds and her call for funds was acknowledged by the well-wishers of the educational movement in India. Money poured in from America, Europe and India, of which an account, in the name of the Central Hindu Girls' School, was opened with the Bank of Bengal.

The promising financial basis and the careful conduct of the school caused the Board of Trustees to feel justified in taking its responsibility upon themselves as a part of the national educational movement in which they were concerned, and on 29th December, 1904 it passed a resolution to this effect and confirmed the list of the members of the Managing Committee, as given below:-

Chairman, Mrs. Annie Besant	...	Benares
Vice-Chairman and Hon. Principal: Miss Francesea Arundale	..	Benares
Vice-Principal: Miss Palmer	...	Benares
Pt. Suraj Narayan Bahadur	...	Lucknow
B. Upendranath Basu, B.A., LL.B.	...	Benares
M.M. Pt. Aditya Ram Bhattacharya, M.A.	...	Allahabad
B. Dhana Krishan Biswas	...	Benares
B. Sris Chander Bose, B.A., Sub.Judge	...	Ghazi pur
B. Tridhara Charsen Bhatta	...	Benares
Pt. Parmeshri Dass	...	Bara Banki
B. Govinda Das, Rais & Hon. Magistrate	...	Benares
B. Bhagawan Dass, M.A.	...	Benares
Miss Edger, M.A.	...	Benares

Pt. Bal Krishan Koul, M.D.	...	Lahore
Pt. Chheda Lal, B.A.	...	Benares
Rai Sahib Pyare Lal	...	Delhi
Pt. Ram Narayan Misra	...	Benares
B. Kali Charan Mitra	...	Benares
B. Purenendu Narayana Sinha, M.A., B.L.	..	Bankipur
M.R. Ry. P. Narayana Iyer	...	Madura
Mr. Sakha Ram Pandit	...	Benares
Rai Bahadur Kumar Parmanand, Judge	...	Lucknow
Mr. Raghavendra Rao	...	Benares
Countess C. Wachtmeister	...	Sweden
Pt. Iqbal Narain Gurtu	...	Benares
Babu Kali Charan Mitra	...	Benares
Hon. Treasurer: Mr. G.S. Arundale, M.A.	...	Benares
Hon. Secretary: Miss A.J. Wilson	...	Benares

The managing committee was invested with powers and responsibilities similar to those of the C.H.C. managing committee, for purposes of administration and of affiliation of other girls' school.

The initial difficulty of the carriage of the children between home and school was at first overcome by procuring an omnibus and a pair of steady horses, but as the number had increased, a bullock cart and trotting bullocks were also used. Some parents, residing very near to the school, made their own arrangements for the safe-conduct of their children,

which relieved the Principal of a serious responsibility. To facilitate the picking up of the children, collecting rooms, in charge of a teacher, were arranged at different parts of the city. In the prospectus of the school the Principal had notified clearly that the school omnibus was to wait at the four collecting stations to take up and set down children, and the parents were requested to insist upon punctuality to arrange for the safe conduct of their daughters.

When we study the Prospectus of the C.H. Girls' School we come to know that the school had for its object the simple education of Hindu Girls, combined with religious training. The intention of the founders was to train Hindu girls to be good wives and mothers of the Hindu type, and to impart to them that knowledge which would enable them to fulfil those duties which should be carried out by the mother during the first few years of the child's life.

Annie Besant had emphasized the need for the education of wise home training for the girls. She believed that the Hindu woman was not lacking in devotion and spirituality, what she actually required as an advantage of education was to be able to become the first teacher of her children, so that she would not only be their guide in devotion and religion, but also their instructor and leader in their first effort in the path of knowledge.

Annie Besant wanted that "the national movement for girls' education must work on national lines; it must accept the

general Hindu conceptions of woman's place in the national life, not the dwarfed modern view but the ancient ideal".¹ She liked to see in the women the learned and pious ascetic or the Brahmavadini of older days. She did not dream even that a woman could be trained to become the rival and competitor of man in all forms of outside and public employment, as was prevalent in the west. But she did not appreciate the idea of an Indian woman working in any office outside her home. To her it was not a national advancement of India if its women were competing with the men of the country for the employment in the different professions. She wrote: "The national movement for the education of girls must be one which meets the national needs, and India needs nobly trained wives and mothers, wise and tender rulers of the household, educated teachers of the young, helpful counsellors of their husbands, skilled nurses of the sick, rather than girl graduates, educated for the learned professions".²

Essentials of Indian Women Education according to Annie Besant:

Annie Besant had made a scheme of General education of the Hindu Girls which was applied in the Central Hindu Girls School established by Annie Besant. Her scheme had the following essentials:-

1. Religious and Moral Education:

Annie Besant wished that every girl must be taught the

1. The Education of Indian Girls, Op.cit. p.2.
2. Ibid. p.3.

fundamental doctrines of her religion. She recommended the use of the Sanatana Dharma series I and II in the vernaculars. When the girls were thoroughly grounded in both the series they would be able to study and understand the Advanced Text-Book in their homes, after the completion of their school education. Annie Besant was definite that the moral instruction would certainly be useful if it would have been drawn from the study of Mahabharata, Ramayana, Munismriti, and Tulsi Das Ramayana -- all these books to be used in vernacular. To this she wanted that girls may add the teaching of hymns in the vernacular and stotras in Sanskrit and also commit to their memory some passages from the Bhagavad Gita, Hamsa Gita and Anugita.

Annie Besant approved that the simple and plain explanation of difficult shalockas must be given. But, wrote Annie Besant "where any girl shows capacity for deeper thought, philosophical studies and explanations should not be withheld from her, so that opportunity may be afforded for the reappearance of the type of which Maitreyi and Gargi and the women singers of the Vedas were shining examples".¹

In the Central Hindu Girls School Annie Besant was ready to admit the girls of other religions. So she wished that the girls belonging to the other "faiths should be similarly instructed, the books of their respective religions

1. Ibid. p.4.

taking place of the Hindu works".¹

2. Literary Education:

To Annie Besant, a sound literary knowledge was essential for the girls, both reading and writing of their literature in the vernacular was very necessary. She understood perfectly well that a study of literature in ones own mother tongue offers a store of enjoyment for the leisure hours.

After the knowledge of mother tongue Annie Besant recommended the knowledge of a classical language, Sanskrit or Arabic or Persian, according to the girl's religion, should be learned sufficiently to read with pleasure the noble literature contained therein.

With a mastery over the classical language, the third subject which Annie Besant recommended for the girls was the Indian History and Indian Geography. These subjects -- history and geography -- were to be thoroughly taught and the reading books provided containing stories of all the sweetest and strongest women in Indian story, so that the girls might feel inspired by these noblest type of womanhood.

Fourthly, the knowledge of English language was also considered very important for the women by Annie Besant. She was confident that the knowledge of English would thus open to the girls the world of thought outside India.

3. Scientific Education:

For girls the scientific education was very necessary because it provided a knowledge of many things required by a

women, such as

(i) A knowledge of Sanitary Laws: The hygiene of the household was required to be taught thoroughly. Every girl must have a detailed understanding of the value of fresh air, sunlight and scrupulous cleanliness. The knowledge of the sanitary laws, learned in the school room were sure to find their field of practice in the home.

(ii) The Value of Food-stuffs: To women the knowledge of the value of food stuffs was considered very essential by Annie Besant. She expressed her viewpoint that the knowledge about the chemical properties of each food stuff will enable a house wife to understand their right effect on the body in the building of muscles, nerves, tissues and their nutritive qualities.

(iii) Simple medicines, 'first aid' in accidents, nursing the sick: Annie Besant felt that some knowledge of simple medicines was needed by every mother, so that on very small injuries she would not call in, incessantly, a doctor. Annie Besant liked to see every girl thoroughly instructed in medicines, botany, the preparation and use of herbs. She wrote in her scheme of the education of Indian Girls that every girl should be fully trained by the school so that "she should be able to deal with accidental injuries, completely with slight ones, and sufficiently with serious ones to prevent loss of life while awaiting the surgeon's

coming".¹ In the girls school Annie Besant laid stress on learning of simple nursing by every girl and the importance of accuracy in observing directions, keeping fixed hours for food and medicine was also emphasized.

(iv) Cookery of the more delicate kind: For Annie Besant a knowledge of cookery had always been an important part of the education of the Indian housewife, and this she also included in her system of education because she believed that this art of cooking was the basis of good life and cordial relations of the wife and husband and children. She wrote "The Indian cook.... does his work all the better if the house-mother is able to supervise and correct".²

(v) Household management, and the keeping of account:

For girls the education of good arithmetic was considered essential, by Annie Besant, "for quick and accurate calculation of quantities and price, and the keeping of account".³

4. Artistic Education:

Annie Besant laid great emphasis on artistic education of the girls. She advocated very forcefully that "Instruction in some art should form part of the education for a girl, so that leisure in later life may be pleasantly and adequately filled, instead of being wasted in gossip and frivolity".⁴

1. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, Op.cit. p.422.

2. "The Education of Indian Girls", Op.cit. p.7.

3. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, Op.cit. p.423.

4. The Education of Indian Girls, Op.cit. p.8.

She was very much interested in giving musical education to the girls. She liked the singing of Stotras, to an accompaniment on the Vina or other instruments and considered it a refined and delightful art in which the girls took greatest pleasure and it enabled them to add greatly to the charm of home.

Annie Besant recommended the teaching of drawing and painting to the girls, which gave delight to them and their deft fingers could readily learn.

She had a special place for artistic embroidery and needlework of all kinds in her schools. She liked that all girls must learn needlework and embroidery for its delicately shaded gradations of colour and its graceful forms which trained the eye and the taste. But Annie Besant did not like that in needlework the girls may learn working samplers which were done in coloured thread, with plants and objects. She wanted that the girls must not copy the third rate European needlework done a century back. She said "I really sometimes think that all the things Europe is tired of and discards are sent over here for the girls' schools to learn, leaving aside their own art, their own handwork and their own exquisite embroidery and manufactures".¹

In her plan of education for girls Annie Besant had made it compulsory for all girls to learn sewing, darning

1. The Education of Indian Girls, Op.cit. p.

1. Annie Besant: 'A Plea for the Simpler Life of the East' compiled in 'The Birth of New India', pp.417-18.

and the cutting out of garments used in their districts. Without the knowledge of this education was not complete.

5. Physical Education:

In her system of education Annie Besant did not ignore the need for the training and strengthening of the bodies of the future mothers. She recommended the introduction of physical exercises of a suitable kind to form of a part of the girls school curriculum. She was sure that the lack of physical exercises leads to many chronic ailments in womanhood and to premature old age.

She wanted to have all those games in her school which may give exercise of a pleasant and active kind. She wrote "those conduce to the health of the young bodies, and give grace to movement, removing all awkwardness. Nothing is prettier than to see a group of girls moving gracefully to the sound of their own young voices, in and out, in many evolutions, with clapping of soft palms or clash of light playing-sticks".¹

Above explained is the plan of education which Annie Besant wished to introduce and which worked very successfully in the Central Hindu Girls' School, Benares, from 1905-1914, when she surrendered this school also to the Benares Hindu University authorities, along with the C.H.Ā., Benares.

1. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, p.424.

The Scheme of Girls School in Practice:

In order to understand the Central Hindu Girls School's working and appreciate the great intelligence of Annie Besant with which that scheme was made to serve as a way to train the Indian girls into useful and cultured women, to prove true heads of happy household. Here with the help of Annual reports of the Central Hindu Girls' School we will try to see how the outlived scheme actually worked.

(1) Academic Studies: The school provided for a ten years course in 1913 and had in previous years the education for lower classes and with progress of it new classes were added every year. In 1905 school had only three classes in 1909 six class, in 1911 two more classes were added and in 1913 it was a full fledged High School.

The School provided the education between the ages of 6 and 16 years and was divided into two departments, each with ten classes and two preparatory sections A and B, viz:-

Ten classes and two preparatory sections for children whose mother tongue was Hindi with Hindi speaking teachers. Ten classes and two preparatory sections for children whose mother tongue was Bangla with Bengla speaking teachers. As soon as the child knew how to read and write her own vernacular she was also taught Hindi.

There were two Preparatory Sections, A and B: (Each of six months) 0 to the First of these sections children were admitted at 6 years of age.

Two Lower Primary classes (of one year each): In these classes the children were taught to read and write correctly in their own vernacular, to work examples in the first four rules of arithmetic and mental arithmetic, geography, drawing and painting, and needle work.

Two upper Primary classes (each of one year):

In these classes the children were taught Sanskrit, household accounts, geography, drawing, painting and a wider knowledge of the vernacular literature. Lessons were also given in needle-work, cutting out garments, embroidery, general household knowledge, and in cooking.

Two Lower Middle Classes (each of one year):

These years are devoted to widening and perfecting the studies begun in the earlier classes.

There were arrangements for the education of girls also over 16 and for training teachers.

Here we shall try to discuss also the curriculum and the books taught in different classes of the school.

The curriculum of the school consisted of the following subjects:

(a) General: Reading and writing in the vernacular of the child (at least two periods were devoted daily to the teaching of vernacular, to Stotras and religious teaching); arithmetic; geography; general knowledge of the history of India; drawing; painting, modelling; needlework; including cutting out, mending, embroidery and other work; physical

training and music.

English, in the middle and advanced classes, was taught to those whose parents desired it.

Religion was taught by the learning and chanting of Stotras and Hindi & Bengali Bhajans, and in the reading lessons by religious stories taken from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas.

(b) Special: (For the elder girls) elementary Sanskrit, domestic economy, including sanitation; cooking and household work; first aid, nursing and simple household remedies.

Curriculum and List of Books used in the Central Hindu Girls School in 1908-9:

Preparatory Sections: 1st year (6 months) : (A)

Subjects: Religion -- stories and pictures

Writing -- To copy letters from a Primer or chart.

Arithmetic -- To name and write figures as far as 100; and the first principles of arithmetic by means of object teaching.

Object Lessons:-

Drawing:- Slate, Black-board, Chalk

Sewing:- Hemming

Calisthenics: Simple Movements to time

Books in Use

Hindi classes:- Hindi Primer by Shyam Sunder Das

Recommended: Hindi Primer by the Indian Press

Bengla classes: Pratham Bhaga by Ramanand Chatterji

B : (2nd 6 months)

Subjects

Religion : Stories and Pictures

Reading: Book

Writing: Copy Sentences from the text-books

Arithmetic: Notation and numeration. Easy addition and subtraction. Multiplication tables upto 10 x 10.

Object Lessons:-

Drawing:- Slate, black-board, chalk.

Sewing:- Plain sewing and hemming

Calisthenics: Simple Movements to time.

Books in Use

Hindi classes:- Hindi ka Pahila Pustaka, by Shyam Sunder Dass

Recommended: Hindi First Reader, Indian Press

Bengla Classes: Dwitiya Bhaga

Recommended: Hasi Khusi, by J.N. Sarkar, Part I

Lower Primary Classes

Class I (One year)

Subjects

Religion:- Stories, Stotras.

Reading:- Book

Writing: Copy. Write sentences from dictation from the text-book.

Arithmetic:- Four simple rules. Addition and subtraction in Indian money and weights. Tablets upto 12 x 12.
Easy mental Arithmetic.

Geography:- Explanation of geographical terms.

Object Lessons:-

Drawing:- Simple large objects. Black board, Brish work.
Colour matching and mixing. Clay modelling.

Sewing:- Seaming

Knátting:-

Calisthenics: Exercise of arms and feet.

Books in Use

Hindi classes: Balak Benod and Stotras, Indian Press Reader,
Book I, upto page 81.

: Pathashala ki Kariya, First half.

: Lower Primary Reader. Part I,
Published by the Indian Press

Recommended: Bala Bharata

Bengla classes: Sigu Siksha, Part III, by M.M. Tarkalankar

: Padyamala, Part I, by M.M. Bose

: Hasi Khusi, Part II

Recommended: Lower Primary Reader

Class II (one Year)

Subjects:

Religion: Stories, Stotras

Reading:

Writing: Copy, Write sentences from dictation.

Arithmetic: Four compound rules in Indian money and measures.
Tables 16 x 16 with concrete examples.

Geography: India and general. Use of a map.

Object Lessons

Drawing: Leaves, A Table. A Book, Brush Work:-

Stems. Leaves. Clay Modelling.

Sewing: Stitching. Sewing on strings and buttons.

Knitting:

Calisthenics: Exercises of arms, feet and body.

Books in Use

Hindi classes: Dharm. Balak Benod. Stotras

Indian Press Reader, No.I from page 82.

: Pathashala ki Kanya, 2nd half.

: Geography, by Pt. Din Dayal

Recommended: Lower Primary Reader. Mahabharata.

Bangla classes: Kathamala, Padyapatha Part I by

Jadu Gopal Chatterji.

Recommended: Balya Shikha, Padyamala, Part II

Upper Primary Classes

(Class III (One Year)

Subjects:

Religion: Sanatana Dharma Catechism, Part III, Stotras.

Reading: Grammar. To know the parts of speech.

Meaning of Words. Turn Verse into Prose.

Writing: Hindi copy. Dictation.

Arithmetic: Advanced H.C. F. and L.C.C.

Geography: India in detail, scale maps of school and compound.

Sanskrit:

English:

Object Lessons:

Drawing: Leaves. Flowers. Objects. Brush Work --

Leaves and Petals. Clay modelling.

Sewing: Plain darning. Over casting. Running tucks.

Knitting: A Scarf.

Calisthenics: Wands or Rings

Books in Use

Hindi classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Hindi translation)

Stotras, Indian Press Reader No.II.

: Harish Chandra (first half) Ramayana

Recommended: Upper Primary General Reader

Bangla Classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Bangla translation)

Stotras, Sisuranjan Ramayana

by Naba Krishna Bhattacharya.

: Upper Primary General Reader (first half)

: Riju Vijakaran Sanskrit Grammar

Part I by M.M. Pt. Adityaram Bhattacharya

Recommended: Bodhodaya.

Class I V (One Year)

Religion: Sanatana Dharma Part II. Stotras.

Reading: Grammar, Etymology. Explanation of words and sentences.

Writing: Copy. Dictation.

Arithmetic: Simple Proposition. Vulgar Fractions.

Geography: Asia. United Provice in Detail.

Sanskrit:

English: Grammar. Noun. Pronouns. Verbs

Object Lessons

Drawing: Curved Objects in perspective. Brush work --
Indian flowers, clay-modelling.

Sewing: Simple garments. Button holes. Patching and
mending.

Knitting: Socks

Calisthenics: Wands or Rings

Books in Use

Hindi Classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Hindi translation.)

: Harish Chandra (Second half)

: Indian Press Reader IV

: Riju Vyakaran Part I by M.M. Pt. Aditya

: Ram Bhattacharya

Recommended: Ramayana. Upper Primary Reader

Bangla classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Bengla translation)

Padya Path Part II by Jadu Gopal Chatterji.

: Upper Primary Reader Part I.

: Sanskrit Kabita Prasang.

Recommended: Stotra Mala, Sanskrit, Sisu Mahabharata

by Tinkori Banerji, Niti Gatha, Part I

Lower Middle Classes

Class V (One Year)

Subjects

Religion: Sanatana Dharma Part I. Stotras.

Reading:

Writing: Copy. Dictation.

Arithmetic: Practice and Interest

Geography: General. Maps to be drawn

Sanskrit:

English:

Object Lessons

Drawing: Groups of Objects. Brushwork -- Foliage
and Flowers. Clay modelling.

Sewing: More advanced of class IV

Knitting: More advanced of class IV

Calisthenics:

Cooking: Household (Done at home and examination and prizes
awarded at school)

Books in Use

Hindi classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Hindi translation)
Stotras, Ramayana (selection from Tulsī Das),
Surasagara (Selections), Vinaya Patrika
(Selections), Vinaya Patrika (Selections),
Lower Middle Hindi Reader.

Recommended: Satya Harish Chandra Natak

Bengla classes: Sanatana Dharma Catechism (Bengla translation),
Prabandhamala by Rajani Kanta Gupta, Sisu
Mahabharat by Kali Prasanna Sircar, Lower Middle
Reader, Kabita Prasang.

Recommended: Charitra Gathan by Gyanendra Mohan Das.

Class VI (One Year)

Religion: Sanatana Dharma

Reading:

Writing: Copy. Dictation

Arithmetic: Compound. Proportion. Decimals

Geography: Asia. Maps to be drawn.

Indian History:

Sanskrit:

English: Grammar, Etymology, Subject and Predicate.
Translation.

Object Lessons

Science: Sanitation.

Drawing: Difficult group of objects. Brush work. Clay
modelling.

Sewing: Embroidery. Indian work.

Knitting: Babies Jacket.

Calisthenics:

Cooking: Household (Done at home and examination and prizes
awarded at school)

Books in Use

Hindi classes: Sanatana Dharma (Hindi Translation)
Ramayana, Surasagar, Vinaya Patrika, Lives
of Hindu Rania by Kashi Nath, Lower Middle
Hindi Science Reader.

Maraden's Revised Indian History.

Sanitary Primer by Dr. Cunningham

Bengla Classes: Sanatana Dharma (Bangla translations),
Sisu Ramayana by Tincori Banerji, Lower Middle
Bangla Reader, Charu Sandarva by Sarat Chandra
Sastri, Prosnottira Mala, Part I by
Hari Mohan Mukerji, Lower Middle Reader.

The Central Hindu Girls' School Benares was also conducting classes from VII to X and were teaching the syllabi prescribed by the Allahabad University, so it would not be worthwhile to note that course here because in it there would have no direct or indirect contribution of Annie Besant in its making.

The courses of the Central Hindu Girls' School were carefully considered by many Committees and sub-committees which had met upon each subject and best books were selected for the different classes.

Artistic Education:

The children took a great delight in modelling small objects in clay. Through modelling the sense of observation was developed and they tried to use their ingenuity in producing the effects they noticed. In the same way pencil and brush to train the eye to notice detail. In the school the needle-work hour was a very busy one, and bags, kurtas, jackets and aasnas were made. The elder children were taught to cut out their own garments, and a sewing machine had been bought, which they were instructed how to use. Embroidered caps, borders and other small articles were also made by some of the girls, under the guidance of one of the Hindu lady visitors who was proficient in that art.

Physical Education:

The daily half-hours' play in the garden of the school was a good treat to the little girls and helped to give them

exercise. The smaller ones were also practised in combined movements. Most of the children turned their attention to outdoor games and their skipping ropes.

Religious and Moral Education:

The C.H. Girls' School made the girls to learn and chant stotras and to read stories from the Ramayana. The school made Bhagans in Hindi and the students were made to sing them accompanied by some instrumental music. All the children knew by heart the stotras which were used daily in opening the school.

Affiliations:

This school was given a special power to affiliate other schools by its managing committee. In 1905-6 the following schools had been affiliated for mutual support on the same lines of work:

1. The Kanya Shikshalaya, Lahore
(affiliated on Feb,14, 1905)
2. The Sri Minakshi Vidyashala, Madura
(affiliated on Jan. 26, 1906)
3. The Hindu Religious Girls' School, Alanthoor,
S. Thomas Mount, Madras (affiliated on Jan.26,1906)

In the session 1906-7 the following schools were affiliated for mutual moral support in combining instruction in the Hindu religion with the best education available:

4. H.P.B. Girls' School, Tiruppoor, Combatores
Distt. Madras Presidency (on March 9,1907)

5. The Hindu Girls' School Combatores
(on March 9, 1907)
6. The Inerprastha Hindu Kanya Shikshalaya, Delhi
(on Jan..8, 1907)
7. The N.P.R. Hindu Girls' School, Vayalpad,
Distt. Cuddapat.
(on Oct. 6, 1907)

Every year the affiliation of new schools took place but as a detailed record of the Central Hindu Girls School, Benares was not available even in the library of Theosophical Society, Benares or Madras, so it was not possible to give a detailed list of the Schools affiliated by the C.H. Girls' School, here.

Miscellaneous Activities:

Besides the activities described above, a number of miscellaneous activities done in the C.H. Girls School may now be briefly mentioned here, which will further bring out the richness in the life of the C.H. Girls' School as a Centre of all-round education.

Miss Francesea Arundale, the Principal, took a special care by giving health-giving physical exercises to use Indian dress and suggested the English teachers to try to use Indian dress, at least when in School.

The staff of the School consisted of the Hon. Principal, Miss Francesea Arundale, the Vice-Principal, Mrs. Palmer, supported by six Hindu lady teachers (one of whom was a B.A.)

There was also a small staff of visiting lady-patrons, who took classes in the subjects in which they were proficient, such as Religious teaching, Sanskrit and Needle work. Their interest and constant attendance both lightened and materially helped in the work. Several Hindu ladies did this regularly.

The Central Hindu Girls' School had several prizes prescribed by benefactors of the school:-

- (a) The Janna -Bai annual prize of Rs.10/- for any purpose decided upon by the Principal.
- (b) The Bai Putlibai Narotundas Madhandas annual scholarship, for proficiency in knowledge of the Hindu Religion, to be held for one year, of Rs.2/-.
- (c) Miss Arundale's Prizes for good conduct and diligence.
- (d) Mrs. Radice's needle-work Prize.
- (e) Mrs. Annie Besant's and Mrs. Butler's Prizes for the best recitation of Bhajanas - (i) In Hindi (ii) In Bangla.
- (f) An Indian lady's prize for the highest aggregate marks in Hindi; reading, writing and arithmetic combined. Rs.5/- in the form of either articles of household use, or the Hindi translation of Valmiki's Ramayana.

The Prize distribution function was held in the month of February each year; the parents of all the children were invited and a magic lantern was displayed. A part of the

hall was used to screened off for the fathers from the portion devoted to the purda-ladies and children. Some times when a large number of parents and near relatives were invited one day was set apart for the fathers and brothers and the other day for the ladies with the children who received their prizes.

The staff of the C.H. Girls' School was helped by some educated ladies. Mrs. Sanjiva Rao, wife of a Professor of the C.H.C., who from her first appearance in Benares had been an honorary teacher in the Central Hindu Girls' School. The supervision and examination of the Bangla speaking classes was undertaken by another honorary worker, Shrimati Nisterini Devi, who payed fequent visits and rendered aid in many ways to the school. Mrs. Iqbal Narain Gurtu had rendered valuable and ever kindly aid in the needle work class, and Mrs. Durga Prasad had brightened the School life by her help.

The school educated two or three girls in 1908 as pupil teachers and after few years the school proved as the nucleus for a Training School for widows and poor girls.

Finally, it would be right to say that the work mentioned above under each heading only represented a portion of the actual functioning of the ideal school. In spite of the several handicaps, of a dearth of trained and adequate staff, the results were so very encouraging, that it was evident that a good want was being supplied by the school. By the

success of the C.H. Girls School many other Girls' Schools were opened, which were affiliated with the C.H. Girls' School and the necessity of Girls education was realized.

3. Shri Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar (1906):

The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Sir Ptatap Singh became the Patron of the C.H.C. in 1899 when Annie Besant had approached him for the cause of the religious education of the Hindus in India. The Maharaja, being influenced by Annie Besant's educational movement, started a Hindu School in Srinagar in 1901, where Religion and Moral Education was an important subject of study. This school was under the aegis of the Theosophical Society of Kashmir and was conducted in the same spirit as the Central Hindu College, Benares -- a spirit that was, which aimed at imparting a thorough Western education, and at the same time so far from attempting, directly or indirectly, to proselytize its inmates, promoted the encouragement of Eastern thought and ideals; believing that upon the fundamental concepts of Eastern Philosophy there might be erected a super-structure of a vital, rational and religious training, which was conjunction with the teachings of Western Science, with its more rigid and exacter methods of intellectual development, might result in the evolution of a type of mind which, while acquiring the exactitude of Western thought might, at the same time, preserve intact all

that was of supreme value in its own traditional ideals.¹

The Maharaja had given a good building, a large house on the river, to the School. He was also paying the salary of Mr. Wilson, an English Principal of that school, appointed by Annie Besant. In 1902 the daily attendance of boys in this school was over 325 and in 1906 it was 900.

In 1905 a movement was set on foot to improve the education condition of the Kashmiri people by providing a College, where a higher standard of education could be imparted than was previously possible for the great majority of students, who from poverty or for other reasons, were debarred from proceeding to existing centres in India. Until then Kashmir had been dependent upon Missionary School for their secular education receiving a wrong kind of religious education.

In consequence of this inability, education in Kashmir had fallen far below the level of India generally, and the necessity of providing for this want was recognized. Through Raja Daya Kishan Koul, his private secretary, the Maharaja invited Annie Besant to visit Kashmir for some consultation about the educational matters, to which the Maharaja felt deeply concerned. On 1st May, 1905, Annie Besant, accompanied by Miss Wilson, G.S. Arundale and M.U. Moor (who was to enter the service of the Kashmir Government as Principal of

1. Collie, A.W. (a letter): "Kashmir: Shri Pratap Hindu College", published in the C.H.C. Magazine of July 1, 1909, pp. 174-75.

the Hindu High School) had left Benares for Sringer.

On 7th May, 1905 a special meeting was held which was attended by the Maharaja, Annie Besant, G.S. Arundale, Maharaja's brother, General Raja Sir Amar Singh and Raja Day Kishan Koul. The discussion was mainly about the reorganization of the tiny Hindu High School to form the nucleus of the first college in that beautiful but impoverished state.

The foundation stone of the new planned college, the Sri Pratap Hindu College, Sringer, originally under the auspices of the Theosophical Society and Central Hindu College; with M.U. Moor as the first principal, was laid by the Maharaja of Kashmir, on his birth day, in August 1906. In 1913 the word "Hindu" was dropped from the name of the College.

This College had the same syllabus, which was introduced in the C.H.C. and all the Principals of the Sri Pratap Hindu College one after the other were appointed by Annie Besant with the consultation with the Maharaja of Kashmir. Annie Besant took a special interest in the progress of this College. In 1910 when the financial conditions of this College were deplorable, Annie Besant met some wealthy people in the country and discussed the position of this College. She wrote: "The Honorary Secretary of the C.H.C. and myself left Benares for Allahabad on April 3rd, 1910, and I discussed there with Pandit Moti Lal Nehru the financial conditions of the Sri Pratap Hindu College, Kashmir. Pandit Moti Lal with

his usual generosity, made himself responsible for the addition of Rs.2,400 for the current year..... and he further decided to form a Committee of Kashmiri gentlemen in the U.P. and Punjab, to collect funds for the improvement and upkeep of the College in their own land. Kashmiris outside Kashmir ought certainly to take on themselves this burden, for they are an exceptionally prosperous community, and Kashmir itself, is very poor. The people are, clever, but they have no chance as things are, and the efforts of the H.H. The Maharaja to improve the condition of the people should be supported by the wealthy Kashmiris outside his sway".¹

The College had highly educated and experienced Principals. The first Principal was Mr. M.U. Moore, an old member of the Theosophical Society. He was a graduate of Cambridge University, a Trinity College man, who took Honours in Mathematics and was singularly clear in his expositions. He worked as a Professor of Mathematics from 1902-1905 in the Central Hindu College. In 1905 he was appointed as Headmaster of Hindu High School Srinagar and when that school developed into the College, he was made the first Principal of that College. In 1909 Mr. Moore was offered the Principalship of Ananda College, Colombo and he left the Kashmir state service and joined the new post. After Moore, Mr. A.W. Collie was

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1. Annie Besant: "In the Crow's Nest", The Central Hindu College Magazine, of May 1st, 1910, p.106.

was appointed as the Principal but he died soon and in 1910 Pandit Ikbalkishen Sharga, well-known and highly esteemed educationist of the U.P. was appointed as the Principal. Mr. Sharga was the author of some useful books on Philosophy. He was able to bring the College into good order, and to realize the hopes with which it was founded.

After Mr. Sharga joined as Principal the College revived its old rule which required the students to join in a short religious prayer before they went to their classes and began their daily-work. Speaking on the utility of religious education Mr. Sharga had said to the students of The Shri Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar "I think we are bound to introduce a religious element in your education in order to carry out the views and wishes of the founders of this College. And this ought to receive much attention; for the evils of a merely secular education are too obvious to be pointed out. We are, however, making a small beginning; perhaps later you are perhaps too young to understand the importance of this. But as you grow older you will realise the great truth that your success in life depends upon sound moral and religious principles, and that these principles ought to be learnt and taken to heart at an early age..... It is only by being true to your Dharma, by having faith in God and doing your duty in the right spirit, that you will, find real pleasure even in what are commonly called the good

things of this world; you will have a larger share of physical comforts, and will enjoy in a higher degree the esteem and affections".¹

Under Principal Sharga's care the Shri Pratap Hindu College progressed in all directions. The College started a unanimously styled literary club. All the students had joined this club and most of them took a keen interest in its proceedings.

Religious instruction was an important element in the school curriculum, and one of the boys who joined the All India Religious Examination held in 1910 by the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College, Benares, headed the list of successful candidates and won the Vasanta Gold Medal, a mark of distinction of which the School was very proud. Annie Besant wrote on the success of the boy of the Shri Pratap Hindu College in her Central Hindu College Magazine "We are glad to announce that Kashmir has carried off the Vasanta Gold Medal and prize of valuable books in the all-India Religious Examination for Schools affiliated to the C.H.C. Pandit Shri Kanth Thusa, of the Shri Pratap Hindu Collegiate School, was the winner".²

Some further improvement in library, read-room, and addition in the staff and extension of the College building

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1. Ikbāl Kishen Sharga: "Shri Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar", the speech published in The Central Hindu College Magazine, 1st July, 1910, pp. 176-77.
 2. Annie Besant: "In the Crow's Nest", published in the Central Hindu College Magazine, of July 1st, 1910, pp. 170-71.

were brought out by the Principal Sharga.

But in 1913 when Benares Hindu University took over the charge of the C.H.C., the Shri Partap College was taken over by the Kashmir State Government from Annie Besant, and its management and organization became the sole business of the Kashmir Government after 1913.

4. The University of India (1910):

Annie Besant had a very systematic scheme before her about university education. She had made a deep consideration on the need for and the fundamental ideas of the Indian University system. In 1905 she had started discussing with her friends and the members of the C.H.C. trust, about the establishment of a national system of education, not opposed to, but standing apart from the government and the Christian Missionary systems alike.

In a letter, written to Hirendranath, Annie Besant's Calcutta friend, a trustee of the C.H.C. and legal adviser to the Board of Trust, which appeared in many Calcutta papers, she discussed the question of University education. Annie Besant wrote this letter in December, 1905 and her scheme took a final shape in 1910. In letter she wrote: "The needs of India are, among others, the development of a national spirit, an education founded on Indian Ideals and enriched, not dominated by the thought and culture of the West. This education in its literary side, should include the teaching of

Indian literature as primary, and of foreign literature as Secondary; the teaching of Indian history as primary, and of foreign history as Secondary; the teaching of Indian Philosophy as primary, and of foreign philosophy as secondary. On its scientific side, it should include the science of the science, especially in psychology and medicine, of the East, on its technical side it should embrace all the provision for the industrial life of the country -- industrial chemistry, agriculture, crafts of every kind, engineering and mineroslogy etc. etc., on its commercial side, sound training in commercial correspondence, shorthand, type-writing, book-keeping etc. etc. It should establish professorships and fellowships for the encouragement of Sanskrit and of Arabic learning and should give to these the position held in European Universities by Latin and Greek. It should have its chairs of Theology -- Hindu, Musalman, Parsi and even Christian, since there are in India a few long-established Christian Communities".

She wrote further in elaborating her point "Universities based on these ideas, should be established in India. To begin with, the limits of the five present provinces might be accepted and one University might be formed in one, and then another in a second, an so on; later if need arise, a larger number may be established. These universities should each have a Senate composed of all its graduates of

a certain rank, and a Syndicate for administrative purposes. They should affiliate Colleges, denominational and undenominational. The scale of fees should be moderate and universal; there should be no age limit for matriculation; each university examination should represent a definite standard, the same in each university, and students should pass freely from one to another. Great freedom for experiment should be allowed to recognized schools and affiliated colleges, and variety in details with unity in essentials should be sought".¹

In her letter Annie Besant gave an outline of her ideas about a university, which she wanted to found. In her university, though she was in favour of denominational colleges, she wanted to have an Indian spirit, affiliating all institutions without any distinction of religion, thus preparing graduates and under-graduates for the life of the world, in which men of all faith should co-operate for public ends.

In 1910 Annie Besant finalized her scheme of the University of India. The Central Hindu College Magazine of 1st June 1910 published her scheme, which was her first effort to reform the University education of India. The Viceroy of India had expressed his approval of the petition which was being submitted to the King Emperor through the proper channels. The scheme itself, as the Magazine wrote, is a historic landmark in Indian History of Education, both

on account of its provisions and on account of the distinguished list of members of the first Board of Trustees, which contained the names of representatives of all religions in India. We print below the essential parts of the historical document to indicate the principles of higher education which Annie Besant had evolved, and which were to be taken over into the later (1917) National University Scheme.

"To

The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council,
The humble petition of the Under-signed
inhabitants of India.

Sheweth as Follows:

1. That for some time past your petitioners have felt the need for and are desirous of establishing a new university in India, having a field of activity of a distinctive character from the existing universities, and possessing special features of its own; moreover your petitioners believe -- in accordance with the declarations of the Imperial Government on many occasions -- that higher education should more and more devolve on private and voluntary endeavours, thus lessening the burden on the State, and that the establishment of a University resting on such endeavours is absolutely necessary for unifying and rendering effective Indian initiative in educational matters.

"2. The most marked speciality of the proposed university will lie in the fact that it will affiliate no college in which religion and morality do not form an integral part of the education given; it will make no distinctions between religions, accepting equally Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian and Muhammadan, but it will not affiliate any purely secular institution. It will thus supply a gap in the educational system of India, and will draw together all the elements which regard the training of Youth in honour and virtue as the most essential part of education. It will be a nursery of good citizens instead of only a mint for hall-marking a certain standard of knowledge.

"3. The second important speciality will be placing in her first rank of Indian philosophy, history and literature, and seeking in these, and in the classical languages of India, the chief means of culture. While Western thought will be amply studied, Eastern thought will take the lead, and Western knowledge will be used to enrich, but not to distort or to cripple, the expanding national life.

"4. The third important speciality will be paying of special attention to manual and technical training, to science applied to agriculture and manufactures, and to Indian arts and crafts, so as to revive these now decaying industries, while bringing from the West all that can usefully be assimilated for the increasing of national

prosperity.

"5. Your petitioners desire that, in the beginning, the university of India shall be only an examining body like the Government Universities in India, and the well established Central Hindu College, Benares, has given permission to the proposed University to use its building for Examination and office purposes; they trust, however, that the University will later, become a teaching body, and fulfil the true ideal of University life, unknown at present in India, and for this they have made preparation in the powers asked for.

"6. Your petitioners believe that the interests of education in India will be greatly advanced by the proposed undertaking, and that the success of the said undertaking will be greatly promoted if it should seem fit to your Majesty by your Royal charter to incorporate and establish a University in India under the name of the University of India, with such powers as to your Majesty may seem proper for the purpose of carrying out the objects aforesaid.

"Your petitioners therefore most humbly pray that your Majesty may be graciously pleased in the exercise of your Royal prerogative, to grant a charter of Incorporation creating the University of India, and extending to it all the powers, privileges and provisions fully set forth in the accompanying draft charter, or such of them as to your Majesty may seem meet.

"II - The University shall have the powers following:-

"1. To impart and promote the imparting of Education -- Literary, Artistic and Scientific, as well as Technical, Commercial and Professional -- on National lines and under National control, not in opposition to but standing apart from the Government system of collegiate Education -- attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its Literature, History and Philosophy, and designed to incorporate with the best Oriental ideals of life and thought, the best assimilable ideals of the West, and to inspire students with a genuine love for a real desire to serve the country.

"2. To promote and encourage the study chiefly of such branches of the Arts, Sciences, Industries and Commerce as are best calculated to develop the material resources of the country and to satisfy its pressing wants, including in Scientific Education generally a knowledge of the Scientific truths embodied in Oriental Learning, and in Medical Education, specially as knowledge of such scientific truths as are to be found in the Aurvaiddic and Hakimi systems.

"3. To found and affiliate National Colleges, such Colleges being institutions which recognize religion and ethics as integral parts of a true education, whether they teach these in the College or in denominational Hostels

connected therewith".¹

Hereon follow a set seventeen more articles which we omit to record because they were not giving any special feature of the proposed university. These dealt only with the regular routine of University management such as Professors, Readers, Lecturers, examinations, honorary degrees, and affiliation of other universities and colleges.

The following persons were on the first Board of Trustees, most of whom attained eminent position in the life of India:

Annie Besant, Benares city; Sir. S.Subramania Aiyar, K.C.I.E., Madras; Sir Narayana Chandravarkar, Bombay; Dr. Ashutosh Mukerji, Calcutta; Sir P.C. Chatterji, K.C.I.E. Lahore; Hon.S.Sinha, Benkipur; A Hydari, Hyderabad (Deccan), Govinda Dasa, Benares; B.Cowasjee, Rangoon (Burma; Khan Bahadur N.D. Khandalvala, Poona; Sardar Pratap Singh, Kapurthala; Hirendranath Datta, Calcutta; D.B. Jayatilaka, Ceylon; Syed Hassan Imam, Benkipur; Mazharul Haq, Benkipur; Lala Sultan Singh, Delhi; Ganga Prasad Verma, Lucknow; Rai Bahadur Shyam Sunder Lal, C.I.E; Gwalior.

Annie Besant had drafted this scheme after a good deal of studying the Indian situations and conditions, but in 1911 many changes came in the position of public affairs

1. The Central Hindu College Magazine, of June 1st, 1910, pp.152-53.

and when the Petition for a Royal Charter was ready for signature three chief Muslim supporter withdrew because Aligarh College was already fulfilling the functions asked for in the petition. Since then had come the formal demand for a University Charter from the Muslims and the Petition was drafted and presented through H.H. the Aga Khan. At the same time Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya was also pressing the Government for a Hindu University at Benares.

Annie Besant was thinking very seriously "Is it desirable to send up to the Government three petitions for University Charters? May not such a procedure lead to a refusal of the whole?"¹

To bring about a union between two schemes those of Pt. Malaviya and her schemes, Annie Besant was forced to make certain modifications in her scheme, already before the crown.

So her scheme of 'the University of India could not mature in 1911 and she had to wait for some years more to implement her well-framed scheme by the formation of the Society for the Promotion of National Education which she started in 1918. We shall take up in detail her scheme of the National University in this Chapter, later on.

1. Annie Besant: 'The University of India: Now the University of Benares', Supplement to 'The Central Hindu College Magazine', 1st May 1911, p.1.

5. The Theosophical Collegiate School, Benares (1913):

When, in 1913, Annie Besant handed over the C.H.C. to the authorities of the Benares Hindu University, she established at Benares a new Collegiate School, The Theosophical Collegiate School, with an object of imparting to its students an education which was to meet the requirements both of the spiritual and the worldly life.

Writing about the functions of the school Annie Besant said. "It will be the special endeavour of the School to awaken in its students a clear sense of their responsibilities as citizens of a world-wide Empire, training them to place the common citizenship above all party, provincial, or social, distinctions. The school will, therefore, strive to inculcate in each student: (i) a reverent spirit towards the essential features of his own ancestral faith, and a sympathetic comprehension of religions other than his own; (ii) a loyal devotion to the sovereign; and (iii) eagerness to fit himself to fit himself to contribute to the Welfare of his Motherland".¹ In order to teach these principles, by example as well as by precept, Annie Besant selected the members of the staff with full care so that men of high character may join her school as she regarded character more valuable and important for a teacher than even his academic distinction.

1. Annie Besant: "The Theosophical Collegiate School, Benares", pp. 1-2.

She was very strict that no married student may be admitted to her school and nor later to the college. She had made it a strict rule that if any student married while studying as a student of the school or college had been required to leave the institution at once.

Special stress was laid on physical education; and every student was required to take regular physical exercise in the school playground after the ordinary work of the day was over. Special exercises were provided for such students as, under medical orders, were unable to play games.

All preparation for the next day's work was done during school hours. There was, therefore, no home task lessons nor private tutors.

Every student was required to undergo a periodical medical check up and the report was sent to the parents with treatments if the boy was a day boy.

Every student, whether, boarder or day boy, was required to wear the school uniform while in the school premises. The uniform was consisting of a dhoti or pyjamas and a long coat, white or dark blue according to the season, and a light blue shawl was to be worn at such times as were prescribed by the school authorities. Arrangements for the uniform were to be made with the Headmaster at the time of the boy's admission.

No boy was admitted in the school as a student unless the Headmaster was satisfied as to the suitability of his

place of residence and guardian.

On July 7th, 1913 school was opened, with classes 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, at Jnana Geha, Kamacha, Benares city.

The fees of the school were as follows:-

<u>Class</u>	<u>Tuition fee per month</u>	<u>Admission fee</u>
V ...	As. /12/-	} Re.1/-
VI ...	As.-/12/-	
VII ...	Rs.1/-	
VIII ...	Rs.1/-	

A small boarding house was opened close to the school premises with admission fee of Rs.5/- and monthly charges amounting to Rs.16/- including the cost of uniform.

Annie Besant, being the President of the Theosophical Educational Trust, had appointed the following staff of the School:-

Hon.Principal: G.S. Arundale, M.A.,LL.B. (Cantab)

Hon.Headmaster: P.K. Telang, M.A.,LL[B.

Teachers: B.Sanjiva Rao, B.A. (Cantab)

Damodar Prasad, B.Sc.

Mool Chand, J.C.T.

M.G. Kantikar, B.A.

Miss Herington.

The badge of the school was a silver five-pointed star on the school colour - bright blue.

This school directly came under the control of the Theosophical Educational Trust when it came to function properly.

6. Theosophical Educational Trust: (1913):

This trust was incorporated in April 1913 and took hold of all the schools which were previously affiliated to the C.H.C. Thus with its inception, twenty two schools came under its control for guidance. It was stronger in the branch of girls' as well as that of boys' education.

The objects for which the Trust was established were:

1. To establish schools and colleges which shall be open to students of every faith and in which religious instruction shall be an integral part of education.
2. To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the carrying out of the above object.

The Governing body of the Theosophical Educational Trust had the following important persons:-

Annie Besant, President, Madras; A.Schwarz, Hon.Treasurer, Madras; Ernest Wood, Hon.Secretary, Madras; Sir S.Subramania Aiyar, Member, Madras; K.S. Chandrasekhare Aiyar, Bangalore; Khan Bahadur N.D. Khendalavala, Poona; G.Soabbish Chetty, Madras; B.P. Wadia, Madras; G.S. Arundale, Madras; Francesa E. Arundale, Benares; C.Kofel, Madras, J.R. Aria, Madras; Kris Chandra Basu, Allahabad; Purnendu Narain Sinha, Bankipur;

A. Mahadeva Shastri, Madras; Hirendranath Datta, Calcutta; L. Arathoon, Gwalior; C.S. Trilokekar, Madanapalle; Sarah E. Palmer, Benares; C. Jinarajadasa, Madras; A. Hydari, Hyderabad (Deccan).

With the inception of The Theosophical Educational Trust twenty-two schools were affiliated to the Theosophical Educational Trust in 1913. These schools were headed by the College at Madanapalle. Following this, a group of High Schools also joined the Trust, most of these schools were at Cawnpore, Benares, Proddutur, Bankipur and Bhavnagar, with others in preparation at Gaya and Palni and elsewhere. No one could deny the splendid work and spirit of those large schools, everyone of them endeavoured with success to embody the ideals of the Trust.

The girls schools were all cared for, mostly by European ladies, well qualified for the work. The Girls' College at Benares headed the list, and this was followed by large schools at Madura, Kumbhakonem, Coimbatore, Vayalpad and Gorakhpore.

In 1916, there were thirty-five schools and Colleges, some of which were completely managed by the Trust, while others were simply affiliated. In the latter case the Trust gave advice, guidance and such assistance as may be practical and desired in general management, without assuming financial responsibility of any kind.

Annie Besant had a special purpose when she founded the Theosophical Educational Trust. She wrote that this "Trust was founded to carry on the traditions of the Central Hindu College, Benares, where Englishmen and Indian worked together on equal terms, where love not fear controlled, where mutual courtesy and respect were the rule of life, where independence was wedded to good manners, where the Englishman was loved as much as the Indian, where patriotism walked hand in hand with loyalty..... This is the tradition the T.E. Trust embodies, and it is trying to revive all that was best in the old relations between Guru and pupil, in a form adapted to modern times".¹

The main work of the T.E. Trust had been mainly the management of Schools and colleges, and of Hostels attached to them, the encouragement of private efforts in the founding and management of educational institution, and propaganda on behalf of educational reform and ideals.

Here we shall discuss the college and schools, in details, which were under the T.E. Trust in order to understand the functioning of the Trust. The material about those colleges and schools had been extracted from the annual reports of the schools and colleges and also of the T.E. Trust.

1. Annie Besant: "The Theosophical Educational Trust", given in New India, September 16, 1916, p.9.

1. Madanapalle College and High School. (1915)

The College and School had classes from I to VI and Intermediate (junior and senior). In this institution each day's work began with morning prayer in the Annie Besant Hall, both School and College being assembled. After the usual prayer by a Hindu, a Christian and a Muhammadan, the Vande Mataram song was sung by all, with musical accompaniment. Each class closed its sitting on the evening with a prayer. One period a week in each class was devoted to religious instruction. The Sanatana Dharma Text-Books was used by for Hindus, the Quran for Muhammadans, and the Universal Text-Book of Religions in general.

Shorthand, Type-writing, Book-keeping, Commercial correspondence and Commercial Geography were taught in the High School department. Sanskrit was not a popular subject in this school.

There were many associations in the School, the following were very popular: (i) The Teacher's Association; (ii) the Teacher's and Parents' League, (iii) the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, (a) Junior, (b) Senior; (iv) the Elocution Society; (v) the Boarders' Union, including an organization for bhajana, devotional music and singing; (vi) Historical association; (vii) the Tamil Sangham; (viii) the College Literary Union; (ix) the Andhra Association; (x) the Athletic Association; (xi) the Scout Troop; (xii) the Guards of Honour.

Writing on this institution Annie Besant says "While seeking to give full intellectual instruction to our students, we lay even more stress on the building of character, and of strong and healthy bodies. Hence we give religious and moral training to our boys, believing that morality needs a religious basis for its compelling power. We teach the boys the religion of their parents, for we consider that a boy should be instructed in his family faith, leaving to his maturity all controversial questions. We find that the training given enables us to dispense with punishment, while maintaining discipline".¹

The Governing Body of this institution consisted of five members: Annie Besant, Ernest Wood, C.S. Trilokakar, James H. Cousins and R. Giri Rao.. The School had 565 students and 45 teachers in 1915.

The Madanapalle school was founded in 1888 by Mr. O. T. Sarma, a theosophist, and had been carried on since 1888 by Giri Rao, who was its headmaster upto 1917, who for more than twenty-two years, at great self-sacrifice, managed to support it. In 1911 Annie Besant sent Ernest Wood as superintendent and he built the laboratory, hall, dormitory etc., and since he became the Secretary of the T.E. Trust, he had managed to collect the money for the construction of the building of

1. Annie Besant: "Madanapalle Theosophical College", a statement at the opening ceremony of the College, given in 'New India' July 19, 1915, p. 12.

the school.

2. The Theosophical Elementary School, Madanapalle,
Chittoor District, Madras Presidency:

This School was sufficiently furnished with pictures, maps, benches and black-boards. Carpentry and gardening had been introduced as special subjects in this school.

The school work began with a prayer from the Bhagavad Gita. Short sayings from the Gita were also painted on wooden boards, along with Telgu translations, and these sayings were to be explained daily to the boys. The Sanatana Dharma Catechism in Vernacular had been adopted as a text-book.

In 1915 this school had 163 students and the range of teaching was for infant class and standards I to IV.

3. The Olcott Panchama School, Madanapalle,
Chittoor District, Madras Presidency:

This school had twenty students in 1915. The School started every day its work with a prayer and the singing of Vande Mataram songs, and religious instruction was imparted by means of stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. National exercises and drill were taught, and occasional races were held.

One of the Chief features of the school was the instruction in shoe and sandal making which was introduced in Feb. 1915. The pupils took interest in this occupation, and it was expected that some of them might afterwards take it up

as their means of livelihood.

4. The Madanapalle Night School, Madanapalle,
Chittoor District, Madras Presidency:

These were three Schools, (i) Krishana Night School, Pappireddipalle. The number of the students in this school was 49, 45 boys and 4 girls, (ii) Raja Night School, Chipili. This school had 69 students -- 50 boys and 19 girls. (iii) The Vasantha Night School, Kanapalle. This school had 50 boys and 12 girls.

In all these schools the total number of the students was 172 and the range of teaching was infant class and classes from I to IV.

All the three schools were provided with powerful Kitten lamps, which were a great advantage in night schools. The religious teaching took chiefly the form of moral stories and lessons. In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic lessons were given in hygiene and sanitation; and other useful subjects, and arrangements were made for occasional magic lantern shows.

These three schools were the voluntary work of the students of the Madanapalle School and College, under the direction of M.R. Ry. D. Rajagopalacharier. These schools served as the examples of the social work with true education inspired in its pupils. Boys who in their youth learnt in this way the happiness of working for others were acquiring

true human knowledge and experience which would render them unselfish and useful citizens in their manhood.

5. The P.V.C. Higher Grade Elementary School, Vayalpad,
Chittoor District, Madras Presidency:

This school had 187 boys in 1915 and the range of teaching was infant class and classes from I to VII.

The school work each day was begun with a suitable prayer followed by a moral lesson, and at the close the day's work was offered to God. The Santatan Dharma Catechism in Telgu and English was used as the foundation for religious instruction from Standard II to Standard VII. On festival days the pujas were explained rationally to the boys as far as possible.

Discipline was maintained in this school without violence or harshness, in accordance with Trust ideals. The occasional meetings of the teachers studied the problems of students with interest and tried to solve them in the light of educational philosophy of Annie Besant. There was a literary union, historical association and other movements, in which the teachers also took part. This school had arrangements for teaching the kindergarten subjects and gardening.

6. The N.P.R. Theosophical Girls' School, Vayalpad,
Chittoor District, Madras Presidency:

This school had 83 girl students and it had arrangement for teaching infant classes and upto IV class. The day was

begun with prayer and song in praise of Lakshmi and Saraswati. The Sanatan Dharma Catechism was used as the basis of religious teaching in the classes. Every Friday evening the girls assembled, performed puja to the Goddesses, and spent a happy evening in singing and worship.

7. The National High School, Proddutur, Cuddapah District, Madras Presidency:

This school had 334 students and teaching arrangements upto high school classes in 1915. For the teaching of Science and Commercial subjects, the School was satisfactorily equipped.

The day's work began with prayer in Sanskrit, Telugu and Urdu, some times followed by a short address by any member of the staff or an intelligent student. Hinduism was taught to Hindu boys and a separate class was held for the religious instruction of the Muhammadans. Every Saturday evening there was a Bhajana class conducted, and their mystic aspects explained..... The School atmosphere was predominantly religious.

The students were divided for convenience into two groups, Junior and Senior, and they took part in football, hockey, cricket, badminton, tennis and some national games. A scout Troop had been formed, under Scout Master S. Ganapati Aiyar, a teacher with experience of Scouting in Ceylon.

Proddutur, being one of the chief towns in Cuddapah district, and was much noted for its commercial importance. To satisfy the need for the training of young and ambitious youth eager for commercial training classes had been opened in Shorthand, Type-writing, Commercial Correspondence, Commercial Geography and Banking. This was only a beginning and the school hoped to have a fairly large number of other allied subjects taught to an increasing number of student. Arrangements were also made with a local press to allow some of the boys of the school to learn printing in their spare time.

There were two Literary Associations, Junior for Primary and middle classes, and Senior for High classes. There was also a History Association which met every Sunday to discuss and study the ancient and modern history of India.

A small magazine mainly conducted by the boys of the school, under the guidance of the teachers, had been started. It was a monthly, and was typed and cyclostyled by the students.

The patriotic period was an important feature of this institution. Great men and heroes of ancient India were being lectured upon weekly and for references the books on Ramayana and Mahabharata, written by Annie Besant, were generally used.

8. The Sannaraga Free Sanskrit School, Bellary,
Madras Presidency:

In this school there were only 32 students in 1915, (8

girls and 24 boys). The range of teaching was the elementary classes I to IV and advanced classes I to II.

This was the only recognized advanced Sanskrit School in the Ceded District. It was held in a very suitable building lent by the Theosophical Lodge. The Pandit, who taught in that School, was well up in Kavyas, Alankara and Logic. Religious teaching was given by means of Shlokas from the Bhagavad Gita, which were recited daily. They were learnt by heart in the lower classes and studied with word meanings in the higher classes. A room was set apart, in which students performed Bhajans every Saturday.

9. Dr. English's Panchama School, Nellore, Madras Presidency:

This small free school had 19 students and the range of teaching was only the infant class and Standards I and II. This school was taken up by the T.F. Trust in 1913. This school had a building of its own. The Trust appointed A Subba Row to take up the local management of the school on behalf of the Trust. Soon the school was brought into good working conditions by A. Subba Row.

10. The Shri Dandapani Secondary School, Palni, Madura Madras Presidency:

This school had 162 students in 1915. The school was equipped well with maps and books and a much needed addition had been made to the stock of science apparatus.

The school work opened with a prayer, and systematic religious instruction was given to each class on the lines of Sanatana Dharma text-books.

11. The Higher Elementary School, Tindivana, Sout Arcot, Madras Presidency:

The school had 167 students in 1915, and the range of teaching was from class I to VII.

The school was working with prominent ideals of religion and service, and discipline was maintained as in all T.E. Trust schools without cruelty and arbitrary punishment.

The school work began and ended daily with prayers. Stories from the Aryamata Upakhyanam were explained to the higher classes once a week, and the Headmaster held a Sunday class for all, at which he read and explained Annie Besant's 'Story of the Great War'. Games were receiving a very fair share of attention. The badminton court was a good favourite in daily use.

There were two associations: The Masters' Association, which met every Saturday for mutual help and discussion, and the students Association, conducted entirely in Tamil, every Friday, for story telling, recitation, and papers on familiar subjects.

12. The Shri Minakshi Vidyalahala, Madura, Madras Presidency:

This school had 342 girl students and the teaching arrangements were from Infant class to the VI standards.

The school was well equipped and had a good library of 302 books. Religious teaching was systematic; standards V and VI used selections from the Mahabharata; Standard IV read the Ramayana and Vivekachandrika (moral stories); standard II used the Sanatana Dharma Catechism and Vetri Verkal (moral stories); while standard I had related to it the lives of such heroines as Damayanti, Dravpadi and Sita.

All the standards had Kummi and drill as well as Kalattam. Standards V and VI also had flag drill. In addition to sewing, drawing and music, girls learnt clay-modelling, mat making and gardening.

It was an excellent feature of the institution that 222 girls learnt Sanskrit.

13. Shri Saraswati Pathashala, Kumbhakonam, Madras Presidency:

This school had 175 students with classes from I to VII. The work of the day began with suitable sholakas and was closed with religious song. The Sanatana Dharma series, stories from the Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata were used in religious instruction, which had been systematic. All the classes had ten minutes drill every day, in addition to the weekly drill. Kummi and Kolattam were taught, and the young girls had action-songs and games combined. Want of suitable ground prevented the encouragement of out-door games. Kindergarten occupations, clay-modelling, leaf plaiting, needle-work and drawing were taught. 120 girls learnt Sanskrit.

14. The Marva Gownder Theosophical Girls' School, Coimbatore,
Madras Presidency:

The school had 380 girl students and had arrangements for teaching from standards I to V.

The school was entirely free and, as all the other schools under the Trust, was open to students of any faith. Religious and moral stories in the faith of the pupil were taught. With a view to preparing the girls for their life, special attention was given to the training of character, particularly in its bearing upon the home life of the nation. Discipline and obedience were secured by love.

In addition to a thorough grounding in the elements of education in Tamil, the girls were taught needle-work, clay-modelling, plantain fibre, basket and fancy work, and in the three highest classes cooking, domestic economy and hygiene had been introduced. All the girls learnt music and there was daily musical drill with Kummi and Kolattum. English was taught to the three highest classes conversationally and by the direct method.

15. The Hindu Girls' School, Lalgudi, Trichinopoly District,
Madras Presidency:

This school had 70 girl students and the teaching arrangements were from I to IV standards.

Religious teaching in this school took the form of lessons from the Elementary Text-Book of Sanatana Dharma, the

recital of Thevaram stanzas and the short stories of devotees. The girls played kummi and kolattum and had kindergarten drill and marching with songs. The only manual instruction was in plain needle-work and woolen thread work.

16. The Panchama Free Schools, Madras:

These were five schools:

- (i) The Olcott Free School, Adyar: In all 155 students: 19 girls and 132 boys.
- (ii) The H.P.B. Free School, Kodambakam: In all 76 students: 15 girls and 61 boys.
- (iii) The Desai Free School, Teynampet: In all 200 students: 78 girls and 122 boys.
- (iv) The Tiruvalluvar Free School, Mylapore:

This school had 83 students in all: 20 girls and 63 boys.

- (v) The Annie Besant Free School, Krishnapet:

This school had 195 students: 47 girls and 148 boys.

The total number of students in all these five schools was 705 and the range of teaching was from Kindergarten to standards I to IV. Religious instruction was given in all the schools with the help of a Sanatana Dharma Catechism, compiled specially for the Olcott Panchama Free Schools and by moral stories. The schools opened and closed with prayer. For the few Christian children there was a Christian teacher to instruct them in their own faith.

Indian games were played and different kinds of races were held occasionally. The girls played kolattum and kumai. The Olcott Panchama Free Schools were famous for their dramatisation of stories and the children took great pleasure in this form of acting. The school had manual and art training in drawing, brush-work, leaf work, modelling, gardening and sewing, both by hand and machine, for boys and girls.

A Teachers' Training class was held regularly in Damodar School, where there was a good library of 541 books and mostly related to the art and principles of education. The teachers of all these Free Schools had an association. Each school had a small museum and gardening implements and all were well but simply equipped.

Miss Kofel, Hon. Superintendent, Olcott Panchama Free Schools, Madras wrote: Altogether the work is going on finally well in the five schools. The Inspector's reports on all the subjects, manual and classical, are always very favourable, paper mache work, book-binding, gardening, sewing both for boys and girls (they are all taught together) by hand and by machine, also ratten plaiting, have been especially approved of by the Inspector of late, as they consider these occupations particularly suited and helpful in after life to our class of children. We try to do everything in as inexpensive a way as possible, with such materials as the pupils might easily get in their homes. In the dry sand on the ground the

first letters and drawings are formed; clay, as found in the nearest pond is modelled into the shape of various familiar objects; waste paper is utilized for the papier mache' work; with pieces of ordinary charcoal left over from their fires the children make their drawings on common white or brown paper; they are shown how to mix cheap coloured powders bought in the bazaar in such a way as to produce quite artistic effects in their brush-work; out of small samples received from some of the shops, they are taught how to make little pin cushions, bags, pen wipers and needle-books, while the larger pieces are transformed by them into many coloured coats and jackets, which they afterwards wear with great pride. In two of the schools where there are no mistresses sewing is taught by the masters, who had first to be taught themselves. The vegetables which the youngsters have cultivated themselves in the school garden they take home with great glee, and many a one tries to turn on empty little patch of ground near his home into a flower garden".¹

17. The S.L.N. High School, Bangalore City, Mysore State:

In this school there were 202 boys and it had teaching arrangement for IV and V classes.

The School had become so popular though it was started in 1915, a few months before when the report was

1. Kofel: "Report on Panchama Free Schools" given in the Theosophical Education Trust Report, page 34.

written of that school, though only two classes were opened more than 200 students had joined and nearly 200 more had been rejected for want of accomodation.

The day began in this school by morning assembly in the large hall, when after prayer, a few minutes were taken up by reading and explaining the news of the day. Every week classes were held in which the teacher narrated the lives of famous men, inventors, devotees, explorers, etc. In this way the boys had before their minds' eye great examples, according to which they might mould their lives, and they were reminded of their approaching manhood and inspired with noble, unselfish thoughts. Sanatana Dharma was systematically taught to the Hindus, and the self-sacrifice and devotion of the teachers was an ever-present lesson to the students.

18. The Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Dharma Pathshala, Bangalore City, Mysore State:

This school had 358 students, and range of teaching of infant class, Kannada class I and II, English classes I and II, Forms I to III.

This institution was entirely free. There was also a neat free hostel. The tuition of the school brought the boys to the completion of their third form course, and every boy received regular training in the Industrial section, which included cabinet making, modelling, ratten-work and other

branches, for work in which the school possesses many diplomas and models. There were in all nearly three hundred boys receiving industrial education.

The physical and religious education of the boys was also being well attended to. Football and other games were popular, and badminton was very much liked by the students. There was systematic instruction in Sanatana Dharma. Classes in Hygiene and sanitation would also become a prominent feature of the teaching.

The S.L.N. Debating Society, with its students Library of 600 volumes was a valuable feature of the social life. The students made good use of the library and magazines and papers, and were much benefitted by the meetings and by taking part in the organization.

19. The Santana Dharma High School, Bhavanagar, Kathiavar:

In this school there were 585 students and the range of teaching was standards I to VII and University entrance examination.

There was morning prayer in each class, and religious instruction was given from standards I to VII, in standard I by means of simple stories, in standard II and III orally from the Ramayana, in standards IV and V from the Mahabharata (special emphasis was laid on the essential points dealt with in Annie Besant's 'Shri Ramchandra' and the 'Story of the

Great War'), in standards VI and VII from the Bhagavad Gita. Other books of a general religious character were also read in the higher classes. In this subject two half hours weekly were arranged for each of the classes.

20. The Theosophical Girls' College, Benares City,
United Province:

This College was founded in 1916 by the T.E. Trust with 7 girls students to provide Indian girls with the opportunity of continuing their education to the standard of the B.A. degree. In this respect it was a continuation of the Theosophical Collegiate School for girls, which had been doing excellent work for some years. The college was residential and offered to an Indian women the simple life, so characteristic of the ancient Hindu ideals, while the necessary privacy for study was given by each student having her own room or cubicle. Indian vegetarian food alone was provided. Students were prepared for the Intermediate and B.A. Examination of the Allahabad University; and were sent up as private students, pending the affiliation of the College to a University.

The subjects taught included English, History -- ancient and modern, Sanskrit, Philosophy, Economics and Mathematics. It was hoped that a course of Science would be provided. An elocution and debating club was one of the activities of the College.

As the College was founded by the T.E. Trust, religion

was recognized as an essential part of education. Lectures in comparative religion were delivered weekly, and students were exempted to attend unless their parents or guardians sent their objections in writing. No attempt was made to proselytise. Students were encouraged and given opportunities to conform to the regulations of their own form of faith. The College was entirely unsectarian and adherents of every religion were welcomed in it as teachers and students.

In 1916 the class rooms of the Theosophical Girls' School were used for this College also, but a new building and grounds adjacent to the Girls were made available later on.

21. The Theosophical Girls' School, Benares City:

In 1916 there were only 85 girls students in this school and education was given from preparatory class to matriculation.

The school was well housed in an excellent compound of its own, containing the school buildings and Vasantashrama, the hostel of both school and college.

The text-books of Sanatana Dharma were used for religious teaching in the higher classes. The lower classes were taught by means of religious stories. At the daily opening of the School some of the teachers took turns in telling a short story illustrating an ethical principle. Physical drill with violin and voice accompaniment was given.

The Vasantashrama continued its excellent work for the daughters of the Motherland under the capable management of Mrs. Sita Bai.

23. The Theosophical Collegiate Boys School, Benares:

We have already discussed it in this Chapter in a brief way. This school was opened by the T.E. Trust. In 1916 this school had 216 boys and its range of teaching was from classes III to X.

The school ideals were in the following words of Annie Besant: "Be God-loving and man serving; be strong; be pure; be brave"¹. The school had been able to strike a strong note of cheerfulness, among both teachers and boys, by the substitution of love and trust for fear and doubt. Some of the teachers were honorary; others received merely a subsistence allowance, and all were carefully selected, by Annie Besant, for their joy in the work as a mode of human service.

Religious instruction was given in the form of broad spiritual truth, free from any dogmas. School worker began with a common prayer, and two periods a week in each class were devoted respectively to the study of the fundamental principles of religion from the 'Universal Text-Book of Religions and Morals', and to the special characteristics of each students' religion. For the Hindu the 'Text-Book of Sanatana-Dharma, the Ramayana, the Mahabharatta, and selected Pauranic stories were used. Muhammadan and Christian boys were taught from their own faith. As in other Trust Schools where similar methods were followed, strong friendships were

1. Annie Besant: Birthday Messages (1913-31), p. 1.

were being made between students of different faiths and castes, which would have their influence in later life. The emotions were also trained by a constant appeal to patriotism, a love of the Motherland, a study of the nation and its qualities and powers, and a strong desire to develop these powers for the benefit of the country, the Empire and humanity. Sixty-six students learnt Sanskrit in 1916.

Physical development was secured by games and drill. A scout-Troop was organized. It was a strict rule of the school that no married boy should be admitted.

Manual training was greatly emphasized. The younger boys were taught gardening, paper model-making and music. Frequent excursions were made to neighbouring places of interest. There were debating and dramatic societies also in the institution.

24. The Cawnpore Theosophical High School, Cawnpore, U.P. :

In this school there were 245 boys in 1916 and the teaching arrangements for classes III to X (Matriculation) was available. The relationship between students and the staff was, in most cases, brotherly to a beautiful degree and instead of any kind of compulsion by force or fear, the teachers exercised loving sympathy, noble example, understanding of the young, which came from the knowledge of the Ancient wisdom on which the educational principles and methods were based. The prospectus of the school stated that the institution aimed at sending out into the world youngmen who would endeavour to

live up to the ideals of their religion, and would be loyal and useful citizens of their Motherland. In that school, it was easy to see something of young India growing up into noble manhood.

After morning roll-call the whole school assembled for prayers. First the 'Shanti Sahanavavatu' was chanted by all aloud together, then the Hindus, who were in majority, chanted their own prayers to music, a Muhammadan boy chanted a prayer of his own religion, and this was followed by a Zoroastrian prayer, the three religions of the boys all being thus represented. Afterwards one of the teachers addressed the boys for ten minutes on a special virtue or some other suitable subjects. In class special religions were taught twice a week and universal religion once. Theology took a minor place and interest was centered round the lives of the great Teachers, leaders and saints of the religions. In Hinduism the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Sanatana Dharma Text-Books were used. The boys of each religion had their own religious classes and were taught by teachers belonging to their own faith, but in the case of Universal Religion the boys were all taught together, and thus the teachings they had received separately were synthesized.

Drawing, painting, clay modelling, and music were taught. There was a good library of English, Hindi and Urdu books.

The C.T.S. Debating Society was formed in three groups, classes IX and X, classes VII and VIII, and classes V and VI.

A teacher was specially deputed to guide the debates if necessary, but full liberty of expression was encouraged.

There were many other activities of the School. It had a five 'Guard of Honour', the C.T.S. Brotherhood, Boy Scouting and C.T.S. Magazine.

25. The Theosophical Girls' School, Gorakhpore, U.P.:

This school had 104 girl students in 1916, and the range of teaching was from preparatory class to IV class. There was no systematic religious instruction, but moral lessons were given to each class. School work began and ended with a prayer, and the Headmasters gave moral instruction with the aid of the Sanatana Dharma Catechism. Drill, drawing and sewing received much attention. Most of the girls were in the preparatory class, as they were withdrawn for early marriage before they could progress far in the school.

26. The Anglo-Sanskrit High School, Bankipore, Behar:

The number of students in this school was 590 boys and the range of teaching was from class I to matriculation.

The instruction was mainly in languages (including Sanskrit), Mathematics, History and Geography. Two hundred and fifty-five students had taken up Sanskrit.

Mr. Malliah was incharge of religious instruction, which was systematically carried on. The Sanatana Dharma Text-Books were used for the students. In addition the Headmaster, the

Head Moulvi, the Head Pandit and other teachers gave moral instruction lessons to boys of the different faiths.

There were the following school associations: (1) The Teachers' Association; (2) The debating club; (3) The Hindi Club; and (4) The Christian Club.

The above, mentioned and explained in brief, schools were affiliated by the T.E. Trust, for purpose of spreading the ideals of education, for which it was established. The general business of the Trust was carried on under the direction of the President, Annie Besant, from the Hon. Society, Ernest Wood's Office at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras.

The staff of the T.E. Trust has some Hon. Inspectors, Travelling representative and Assistant Secretary who had done much valuable work. But much work had been done locally by the staffs of the various schools to realize the aims the T.E. Trust stood for.

The Inspector, G.S. Arundale had visited and lectured at Cawnpore, Benares, Bombay and a number of other places and had supplied the press with a great number of articles which had done much to modify the views of Teachers and parents on the fundamental aims and methods of education.

On June 14, 1917, the T.E. Trust founded the Theosophical Fraternity in Education, with the following officers.

Patron: Annie Besant

President: George S. Arundale, MA., LL.B. (Cantab)

Executive Committee: C.S. Trilokekar M.A.; I.N. Gurtu, M.A., LL.B.; N.G. Paranjpe B.Sc.; B. Sanjiva Rao M.A. (Cantab), R.K. Kulkarni, M.A., LL.B.; Ernest Wood, Miss Bernice T. Banning M.A., Ph.D. (Winconsin), F. Kunz B.A. (Winconsin) and C. Jinarajadasa M.A. (Cantab).

Secretary: D. Gurumurti, M.A. (Hons).

The motto of the Fraternity was "Education as Service" and it aimed at drawing together in fellowship members of all other branches of the teaching profession who endeavoured to realize the ideal in their work, whatever might be the school of pedagogy whose method most attracted them. It endeavoured to realize their ideals in practical ways in the school by encouraging:-

"1. Reverence for the child, individuality, and the belief that that individuality can best develop through a discipline that aims at freedom.

"2. Self-discipline and self-government, leading to increased individual and collective responsibility, and to an understanding of the place and function of the individual in the community and in national..... organization.

"3. The equal education of both sexes and the development of a system of co-education in which their mutual influence for good has free scope.

"4. Vital religious teaching as a required part of the curriculum.

"5. The elimination, as far as possible, of competitive individualism and the substitution of co-operative individualism.

"6. To putting into practice of methods which embody sound ideals such as:

(a) The maintenance of discipline by love, and consequently the abolition of corporal punishment and personal indignities.

(b) The training of the physical body, and of the emotions as well as the mind, and the strengthening of spiritual tendencies by organized games, co-operative pursuits, manual and gymnastic arts, aesthetics, nature study that avoids cruelty, and along numerous other lines that may be indicated in due course.

(c) The establishment of surroundings of beauty and proportion, the maintenance of premises that are hygienic and the insistence upon scrupulous personal cleanliness in body and habits".¹

In furtherance of its aims the Fraternity endeavoured to give to the teachers: (i) Enthusiasm in an honourable and exalted profession; (ii) Encouragement in pioneer work; (iii) Aid in the creation of office and administration methods that

1. Ernest Wood: The Theosophical Educational Trust, Report of 1917, pp.56-57.

would help to bring about a high degree of co-operation between teachers, pupils and parents; (iv) The Promotion of international relation between teachers of various countries and between teachers and some advanced pupils, so that there might be a free inter-change of ideas for mutual understanding.

Thus the T.E. Trust had spread its boundaries not only to India but had also affiliated some schools of London and Ireland, and thus advocated the spirit of international relationship.

P a r t - I I I

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION (1918):

In her lecture on 15th December, 1916 Annie Besant discussed the necessity for a step forward towards National Education. She said "The chief educational want of India is colleges run on National lines and under National control, colleges which, like the Central Hindu College at Benares, should be wholly independent of Government while in no sense hostile to it, which should make it their one duty to train up pious, honourable, brave and cultured Indian gentlemen, loyal to their motherland..... To fulfil this duty, it is absolutely necessary that the boys should grow up, through their school and college life, in an atmosphere of pure and passionate patriotism, full of pride in their country, full of aspiration of her service. The high spirit of the boys must be trained and disciplined but never broken".¹

To achieve these aims Annie Besant advocated her scheme of the National education. At its annual meeting, of the T.E. Trust, on December 27th, 1916 Annie Besant placed a resolution before the General body of the Trust which was unanimously passed with these words: "This meeting gives the President power to take steps to use the Trust as a nucleus

1. Annie Besant: "National Colleges", stated in her newspaper, New India, December, 16, 1916, p.10.

for the proposed Board of National Education, the Trust giving over its ownership and managements of institutions, or retaining the same and continuing as a body within the National Board, as may be found advisable or necessary".¹ Thus the T.E. Trust which was founded by Annie Besant and had flourished under her constant care, passed on to become the seed of a greater movement, as the Central Hindu College had become a nucleus for the Benares Hindu University.

Annie Besant had a very clear idea about National Education. She wrote: "What must our National Education be? It must be controlled by Indians, shaped by Indians, carried on by Indians. It must hold up Indian ideals of devotion, wisdom and morality, and must be permeated by the Indian religious spirit rather than fed on the letter of the creeds. That spirit is spacious, tolerant, all-embracing, and recognizes that man goes to God along many roads and that all the Prophets come from Him.

"National Education must live in an atmosphere of proved and glowing patriotism, and this atmosphere must be kept sweet, fresh and bracing, by the study of Indian literature, Indian history, Indian triumphs in science, in art, in politics, in war, in colonisation, in manufactures, in trade, in commerce. The Arthashastra must be studied as well as the Dharmashastra, science and politics as well as religion.

1. Wood, Ernest: The Theosophical Educational Trust Report, 1917, p.6.

"National Education must not be separated from the Homes of the Nation. The ideals, the interests, the principles, the emotions of the one must be those of the other. For the Nation is built out of families, and the present opposition between the Home and the School must cease. The teachers in School and College must work in harmony with the teachers in the Home.

"National Education must meet the National temperament at every point, and develop the National character. India is not to become a lesser -- nor even a greater -- England, but to evolve into a mightier India. British ideals are good for Britain, but it is India's ideals that are good for India. We do not want echoes nor monotonies; we want a choral melody of Nations, mirroring the varied qualities of Nature and of God".¹

When the Madras Government issued its G.O. 559, 1917 which deprived the whole School-and-College-going population of the instruction and advice hitherto given to them in political matters by the lectures of leading politicians of India and thus tried to cut them off entirely from the influence of the great men of their own country.

Annie Besant felt necessary to do something to save the youth of India from becoming either slaves or rebels and the wisest plan seemed to her to carry into execution a scheme,

1. Annie Besant: "National Education" in National Education - a symposium, p.17.

which she discussed with some eminent people of India, to build up a system of National Education.

While writing on May 24, 1917 about her system of National education in a letter which was circulated to a number of well-known people, she wrote: "The whole system must outline a complete scheme of National Education, from the infant to the finished graduate, with the necessary adjuncts of medical inspection, clinics, manual training, workshops etc. An effort will be made to adapt to Indian use the modern ideas of education, evolving the child's cultural faculties, shaping the education to the needs of the child, not the child to an iron system. In view of the special and immediate necessity for the industrial progress, special stress will be laid at first on the commercial, trade and agricultural side of education, with the applications of science to industry and agriculture, but the arts will not be forgotten, and a broad foundation will be laid on which culture may be built.

"Such an education is a crying need in this country, but the Government does nothing to start or encourage it. We need some of the best brains in commerce, manufactures, and applied science, and we propose to establish this education under the control of a Board of National Education, which will frame curricula, appoint examiners, conduct examinations,

and issue diplomas in the different branches studied in its schools, colleges and workshops. These diplomas will become valuable, if we set up a high standard and maintain it.

"It is proposed to teach all subjects in the school under the Board in the vernacular of the Province, teaching English as a compulsory second language. Religious instruction, according to the pupil's ancestral religion, will be given. The curricula will be framed by the Board, and we may be sure that it will place Indian interests in the forefront, and will make India the Centre of study, the study of other countries adjuncts instead of primaries".¹

This was a huge task which Annie Besant wanted to take in hand. She believed it absolutely necessary to have national education for the building up of men of character out of the generation of youths and in her letter she begged for co-operation in her great task.

Annie Besant wrote her letter to 74 persons, only 41 had accepted it, one had promised all possible help and support but had not decided to join the Board.

In June 1917 Annie Besant submitted the draft memorandum of association to the Government. The draft has been recorded here in full:-

1. Annie Besant: "The India that shall be", pp.218-19.

"In the matter of Act XXI of 1860 of the Act of the
Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council,
being an Act for the Registration of Literary, Scien-
tific and Charitable Societies

and

In the Matter of the Society for the Promotion of
National Education.

Draft Memorandum of Association

"1. The name of the Association is "The Society for the
Promotion of National Education".

2. The objects for which the Society is established
are:-

(i) To establish universities, colleges and schools,
under National control, which shall be open on equal terms
to students of every faith, and in which instruction in his
or her faith shall be an integral part of education, unless
the student be withdrawn therefrom by his parents or guardian;

(ii) To establish institutions for research, and for
medical, industrial, commercial, agricultural and other tech-
nical and vocational training, with dispensaries, hospitals,
workshops, farms, and any other conveniences necessary for
the same.

(iii) To establish training colleges for teachers, lib-
raries, Museums, clinics, Hostels, Gymnasias etc.;

(iv) To affiliate any educational institutions or organisations under Indian control, pursuing similar objects or any of them, on terms to be arranged between the governing body of the society or its Executive and the local committee.

(v) To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the carrying out of the above objects.

3. The names of the persons who are the first members of the Governing Body are as follows:-

Madras Presidency:

Annie Besant, Sir Subramania Iyer, Madhava Rao, V.K. Ramanujacharya Rao, B.V. Narssimha Iyer, B.N. Sama, Venkatapati Raju, K.V. Rengaswami Iyendar, Justice Sadasivier, Justice K.C. Chandrasckhara Iyer, Mrs. Chandrasekhara Iyer, S.Kasturiranga, A.Rengaswami Iyengar, Nageshwara Rao, Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Ernest Wood, C.Jinarajadasa, Mrs. C.Jinarajadasa, G.S. Arundale, B.P. Wadia, K.Hanumanta Rao.

Bengal Presidency:

Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore, B.C. Chatterjee, Surindra Nath Bannerji, Moti Lal Ghosh, B.N. Chakravarti, Hirandranath Dutta, C.R. Das, B.K. Lahiri, Ramanand Chatterji, Dr. Ganesh Prasad, Dr. P.C. Roy, Ashwini Kumar Datta.

Bombay Presidency:

Hon. Bhurgri, Hon. Patel, Narottma M. Goculdas, J. Baptista, R.P. Karandikar, B.G. Tilak, N.C. Kelkar, P.K. Telang, Jannadas Dwarkadas, J.D. Mahaluxmiwala, D. Desai, Ratansi D. Morarji,

M.R. Jayakar, Dinshaw, B.G.Horniman, S.K.Bomanji.

United Province:

Hon.Dr.Teji Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru, Sami-ullah Beg,
Munshi Ishwar Sarsen, Iqbal Narsin Gurtu, Miss F.Arundale,
L.Arathoon, B.Sanjiva Rao, Mrs. Sanjiva Rao, Dr.Ranjit Singh,
Babu Bhagawan Dass.

Behar:

Syed Hasan Imam, Purendu Narayan Sinha, Hazarat Haq.

Delhi:

Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Lala Sultan Singh"¹

It seemed desirable to Annie Besant and the members of the governing body to establish a National University, so that degrees may be given. Raja of Muhamadabad suggested to fix the University in the South, at Madanapalle, where the T.E. Trust, which had joined the National Board, a valuable property having $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of land and buildings, Rs.60 thousands of furniture and apparatus, Rs.15 thousand in libraries, cash 80 thousands, making a total of more than 5 lakh of rupees.

The office bearers of the S.P.N.E. (The Society for the Promotion of National Education) were as under:

President: Sir Rash Behari Ghose

Vice.Presidents:Mr. Madhava Rao, C.I.E.

Syed Hasan Imam, Retired High Court Judge

1. "New India" daily paper, of June,1917, p.10.

Treasurer: Mr. Narottam Morarji, Merchant and Sheriff of
Bombay.

Registrar: Mr. G.S. Arundale

Executive Committee:

Chairman: Annie Besant

Vice-Chairman: Hakim Ajmal Khan

Treasurer & Hon. Dewan Bahadur Justice Sadasiviar
Registrar: (Ex-officio)

Members: Kasturiranga Iyengar,
C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Harindranath Datta,
C. Jinarajadasa, K. Hanumantha Rao & Naik.

Chancellor: Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore

Pro-Chancellor: Sir Subramania Iyer

Vice-Chancellor: Sadasiva Iyer

In July 1917 the National Scheme of Education had started its planned work in number of colleges and schools throughout India. Annie Besant wrote her historical document the scheme of National Education which was implemented in all the colleges and schools which were started or affiliated by the Board of National Education.

While writing on the Principles of Education Annie Besant explained her viewpoint, by saying that: "The Principles of Education, in its natural basis in the human constitution, are permanent, while their applications must be local, adapted to the conditions of time and place. Hence while the Natural

Law of Education must be recognized, there should be freedom in experiment and flexibility in application so that we may discover the best methods available to us for the moment, and use them until we find better ones".¹

Annie Besant was confident that only by following the natural laws we can facilitate the evolution of the child into the adult and Education to her was a recognized science having very accurate methods and laws and "not a haphazard dragging up of youth consisting chiefly in forcing into them knowledge from outside' instead of helping them to unfold and utilize the capacities they have brought with them into the world".²

To Annie Besant man was a spiritual being, manifesting in the external world as Intelligence, Emotion and Activity. So she believed that Education of the Young must help the inspiring life to unfold itself, and must train the organs of intelligence, Emotion and Activity, so education must be religious, mental, moral and physical. She declared "Any so-called education which omits any one of these four (religious, mental, moral and physical) departments of human nature is imperfect and unscientific and its outcome will be a human being deficient in one or more groups of capacities on

1. Annie Besant: "Principles of Education", p.1.

2. Ibid. p.1.

the balanced evolution of which the extent of his usefulness to Society depends".¹

Annie Besant used the word "society" only to explain the fact that Education, did not mean to her, the training of an isolated individual, but of an individual living within the social order, the happiness of which depended on the recognition by every one that he was not an isolated but an inter-dependent being. Hence, to Annie Besant, Education was to consider the youth as the embryonic citizen, with social duties and social responsibilities, seeing him in relation to his environment -- the Home, the school and college. Annie Besant was confident that Education was to train every individual to feel himself as a part of his country, with his duties and responsibilities to the Motherland. She wrote that each child "learns to serve the Motherland in the Home, the School, the College as a foundation of, and as a preparation for..... The wider and fuller service, as a man or woman, in the larger world".²

Annie Besant's plan for national education determined to lay the greatest stress on vocational education, after a broad, general course had been duly undergone. She divided the evolution of the individual into three natural periods of each, ending at the ages of 7, 14, and 21. She planned

1. Ibid. p.1.

2. Ibid. p.2.

that till 14 years of age, general instruction with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction and English as a second language should be taught. From 14 years of age, specialized preparation for citizenship must start, while affording the necessary facilities to those, who desired to pursue a more or less purely Arts course, the Society principally existed to feed Indian industries with men and women trained from youth upwards to practical experience in industrial science and in the science of industry -- whether commerce, teaching, agriculture, manual or of any other kind.

Annie Besant contacted some business luminaries to consult about the needs of the merchants and businessmen, as she hoped to plan her scheme of education in such a way that it must be able to supply Indian merchants and businessmen competent subordinates and assistants and hoped also to stimulate research in all the departments of India's material life.

At the very first meeting at Calcutta in December 1917, the Board of National Education had passed the following Resolution:-

"In view of the fact the special stress will be laid on practical training in the educational institutions under the control of the Society for the Promotion of National Education.

Resolved that the Board hereby directs the Executive

Committee to make a special appeal to the heads of Indian business firms throughout the country to support the promotion of National Education:

- (i) by making financial contribution to the Society
- (ii) by providing openings for students who successfully pass out of the National Institutions under the control of the Society".¹

Annie Besant gave some good suggestions by which Indian businessmen could help the Society for the Promotion of National Education. Her suggestions were:-

1. Business firms and industrial businessmen can subscribe and donate for the type of vocational schools or colleges with which the business is most intimately concerned commercial schools -- knowledge of business principles and methods, short-hand, type-writing. Agricultural Schools, trade schools of all kinds. Business firms have the duty of supporting a National System of Education.

2. Scholarship and prizes might be given to stimulate pupils in the direction of such students as need special attention from the point of view of the Nation's material welfare. Landlords do well to give agricultural scholarships..... similar commercial scholarships might be given to encourage trained clerkships in the lower branches..... special schools and colleges for engineering etc.

1. Arundale, G.S.: "National Education", Article in 'New India', of Feb.5,1918, page 7.

3. Apprenticeships: A few firms in India..... have already introduced the apprenticeship system, and there can be no doubt that the success of the educational scheme of the society, based largely as it is on the industrial need of the country, depends upon the willingness of Indian firms throughout the country to give openings to the Society's vocationally trained pupils.

4. The system of Industrial Fellowships for Research Work:

Arrangements might be made by business firms with research students of the National University, whereby the firm would agree to endow a fellowship for a definite number of years, or condition that for a stated period any inventions, or the results of any researches, should be at the disposal of the firm for its own purposes....."¹

Annie Besant made a detailed scheme in providing education in all levels. In the next chapter we shall try to see some important contribution of her scheme to the Indian Education. Here it is sufficient to say that she made a very detailed programme of National Education, suited to the Indian conditions. She established some important colleges in India with the first National University at Madanapalle in Madras Presidency. In order to make the movement speedy Agricultural College was opened at Adyar, Commercial College at Kilpank and

1. Annie Besant: National Education, New India, Jan.16, 1918, p.6.

Training College also at Kilpank, Madras in 1918.

In the Arts College Annie Besant took Professorship of Political Science. Her lectures on Political Science have been published in two volumes entitled "Lectures on Political Science" which clearly give an insight into her ability in handling the subject.

The scheme of National Education became very popular throughout India but within four years its decline also started. Due to lack of funds many good teachers, who had joined the scheme, began to leave it.

In 1914 Annie Besant had joined the active politics, demanding "Home-Rule for India" she edited two papers, The Commonwealth and New India, joined Congress, was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1917. Thus she began to take more interest in the political situations. She went to England to contact the members of the Parliament for the cause of Home Rule, she took part in the great agitation against the Roulatt Bills. Her adhesion to the active politics did not give her sufficient time to take a full care of her scheme of National education. Moreover her overwork, failing health and approaching old age could not allow her to take up many different interests at one time. With the result that the National Education movement began to fail and in 1921 the position of all the institutions was very deplorable and she began to close down or reaffiliate

them with her old T.E. Trust.

We do not find any inferiority in her any of the scheme of education. All the scheme were well planned and nicely worked out. But, to quote the words of G.B. Shaw "Mrs. Besant is a woman of swift decisions. She sampled many movements and societies before she finally found herself; and her transitions were not gradual; she always came into a movement with a bound, and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken".¹

It would be right to say that Annie Besant's swift nature was the main cause which did not allow her to complete any one scheme upto the end. The influence of her personal nature can be very clearly perceived in her schemes -- educational, social and political. She made schemes and shifted them to others to materialize them. In her educational schemes she could not find good, devoted, sincere associates and thus schemes failed, one after the other, though their influence.

1. Shaw, G.B.: "Mrs. Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism", p.17.

CHAPTER - VII

CONTRIBUTION TO SPECIAL ASPECTS
OF INDIAN EDUCATION.

The educational experiments of Annie Besant have been dealt with in the preceding chapter. But apart from her experiments, it is most essential that, we must also consider the contribution of Annie Besant to some special aspects of Indian education. She was a living force not only for her close associates, who worked with her for the cause of Indian National Education, but even, wrote Sri Prakasa, for "those who have known her, think of her still as some one who is inspiring them in a manner as if she were living. They find impossible to leave the moorings to which she bound them or stray from the ideals. With which she inspired them".¹ So on the modern educational system we find a marked imprint of Annie Besant's philosophical thought. Here in this slender Chapter we shall try to make a cursory study to consider Annie Besant's ideas and plans concerning different aspects of Indian education and their contribution to educational system of modern India.

1. Pre-school Education:

1. Sri Prakasa: forward of the book "Of Pattern of Things to Come" by C.S. Trilekakar, p.ii.

To Annie Besant pre-school education meant that system of education which was solely the responsibility of the home to care after. She attached special importance to the care of the body at the pre-school stage and recommended the necessity of post-natal clinics in India for the poor and the neglected children. Elaborating her point of view about the method of child education Annie Besant wrote: "From birth, regularity of habits should be formed, and the infant should be carefully watched, but not be constantly in the arms or lap. He should be left to crawl about and surrounded at a little distance with bright coloured or shining objects, awakening curiosity and exertion to reach them. He should not be put on his feet nor helped to walk; his own efforts are best and safest".¹ Annie Besant believed in the natural growth of the children. She was sure that too much care and protection of the young children was psychologically unsound for the right development of them.

Annie Besant recommended to provide a good number of opportunities of choice to a child of 3 years. With increased opportunities, to be put in the way of the child, he was definitely able to draw out his faculties and aid originality. Annie Besant wrote that the child "should be encouraged to observe and to make his own little experiments. He should

1. Annie Besant: Principles of Education, p.11.

learn to know the parts of his own body, arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, mouth; should count his fingers and toes, to his own great amusement".¹

She suggested that at the age of 4 years the play of the child must be organized, but the organization should not be forced at all. Above all, to Annie Besant, it was a great crime to frighten a little child. She wrote: "A child cannot do his best if he is frightened..... In all shapes and forms fear should be unknown to the child. He should grow up in an atmosphere which encourages the growth of everything good that is in him".² So with the absence of fear the growth of the child would be in a natural way and thus home must provide love and pleasure to the child.

Annie Besant's close association with Dr. Maria Montessori, who remained in Madras for a couple of years, had put a marked influence on her educational thought. Some old colleagues of Annie Besant believe that her understanding of child nature was surely a result of her detailed discussions with Dr. Montessori".³

1. Ibid. p.11.

2. Annie Besant: Civilisation's Deadlocks and the Keys", p.75.

3. When I visited Adyar, Madras and met C.V.Subba Rao and Shankara Menon in August 1966. They told me about the close association of Annie Besant with Maria Montessori. In an interview with Shankara Menon I was told that Dr.Montessori expressed her opinion to Shankara Menon that Annie Besant had truly understood Montessori system of Education and had made a practical use in her scheme of National Education.

For the pre-school stage Annie Besant did not recommend any definite scheme of teaching. She wished to give a free and natural environment to the child where he may play and develop some simple habits of orderliness and cleanliness.

Her ideas about the life and needs of pre-school age of the children were thoroughly understood by the other educationists of her times and afterwards. She contributed many thought-provoking articles on the education of the child in the magazines and newspapers edited by her. Her lectures impressed the parents who began to feel a special responsibility in understanding the nature of the children. Her remark about the development of the children that "the children ought to grow like flowers in the sunshine and not like weeds in the cellar".¹ was a very valuable for those who worked for the children welfare in India.

2. Elementary School Education:

Annie Besant divided the elementary education into two parts -- Primary education for Class I only and Lower Secondary Education for classes II, III, IV & V. So for convenience sake we shall also follow Annie Besant's division in explaining the elementary school education. She divided early evolution of human being into three natural periods of seven years each ending at the age of 7, 14 and 21.

1. Annie Besant: "Speech at the opening of the Shri Sarasvati Pathshala" in 'New India' of Monday, the 21st January, 1918, p.5.

Annie Besant considered the First Period, Birth to 7 years of age, as chiefly the Physical period. She wrote about this period that "the senses predominate, and the passions are stimulated by the contact of the sense-organs with external objects; hence the Education should train the senses by accurate observation of natural objects and of the happening of definite sequences, leading later to the evolution of the reasoning faculties, for the training of which the brain has not developed -- but is preparing -- the necessary physical basis. The greatest possible freedom should be given to the child, consistent with protection from serious injury to himself or others, so that he may show his natural capacities, and they may be drawn out by opportunities provided for them. The passions, hardly yet to be called emotions, must be gently trained. The nutrition of the body is all-important, as serious errors in this vitiate and shorten the whole future life".¹

Primary Education:

According to Annie Besant's scheme of education the primary school education of the child must start when he completed 5 years of age. At this stage the education must centre round play. Here play should be the method of teaching, largely based on the observation of objects. She wrote

1. Principles of Education, Op.cit., p.6.

"Dexterity of finger should be developed by the making of objects. The school-room should be scattered over with attractive objects, which stimulate curiosity and desire to imitate, and thus evoke the creative power of dawning intelligence and shaping touch. The child should wander about freely, and choose for himself the objects which attract him. The teacher should watch him, should help him only when eager effort begins to be discouraged by failure. The child will learn largely by imitation. He will learn exactitude by discovering that badly made things won't work. He will learn that success waits on obedience to conditions, and that impatience, anger, petulance, do not change the nature of things but only ensure failure!"¹

Annie Besant recommended that at the Primary stage all reading and writing must be learnt by play. To her, there was a necessity of proper opportunities to be given as soon as the child was able to play something. She wrote: "It has been found by experience that if a child is given cut-out written letters to play with, and is guided to trace them with his finger many times, the desire to imitate awakens, and he asks for paper and pencil and repeats the motions so often made, thus producing the letters; he teaches himself to write. Reading may begin with short nouns accompanied by pictures,

1. Ibid. p.12.

the word being pronounced by the teacher and thus associated with the picture. If the word and its picture are on a block, and blocks may, after a time, be jumbled together and the child picks out any word named".¹

But all the Primary education must take place in a situation totally free from any kind of fear. Annie Besant was very much critical to the impulse of unreasoning fear which prevailed in the schools of her times. She wrote: "The worst feature of our modern education is its Appeal to Fear.... Sometimes it is the rude breath of a blustering empty bully, that scurries them (the children) forward like dust and dried leaves in a gutter; sometimes the petty nerve-destroying and mind-unhinging pinchings, ear-pullings, and knuckle-rappings, or the sneering remarks of an irritable weakling unfit to be a teacher, that goad them forward in a mental agony of physical fear; again it is the more dignified, more humiliating "cuts" of the infuriated or self-righteous "head"².

In teaching moral and religious lessons to the young Annie Besant gave a very important place to stories in her scheme of education. She wanted that good stories of religious heroes and moral virtues must be narrated off and on to the children. She was also in favour of class singing of stotras and bhajanas accompanied with instrumental music.

1. Ibid. p.12.

2. Annie Besant: "Fear in Schools" an article in 'New India' on August 16, 1916, p.8.

At the Primary stage of education Annie Besant also encouraged the use of drawing and modelling for the young children. For teaching four rules of simple arithmetic the use of models was considered very appropriate by her.

She wanted that every primary school should have a compound for games, exercises, dancing and class movements with descriptive songs. All these activities were sure to put a remarkable influence on child's development and enable the child to see and feel the co-operation and harmony made through the exercises pleasant to all. Annie Besant was in favour of attaching little gardens with schools where young children might be led to observe birds, insects and flowers.

At this stage child must receive a great care about his diet and habits. Annie Besant wanted that a child must be properly nourished and the parents must see that the child may not develop any bad habit. She emphasized a great importance to the selection of good teachers. She wrote that "teachers must be chosen with scrupulous attention to their manners, accent, and general refinement and gentleness. During these years..... the child is chiefly receptive and his whole life is strongly influenced by his surrounding",¹ and the teacher's influence was thus a very great influence in creating a healthy surrounding for the child.

1. Principles of Education, Op.cit. p.13.

The Lower Secondary Education:

In Annie Besant's system of education the elementary classes, II to V are known as Lower Secondary classes, when the children from 7 years to 10 or 11 years attend a separate school. Annie Besant considered that at this stage the child required chiefly emotional education. Here different aspects of education are to be developed:-

(i) Religious Education:

Annie Besant considered that religion had a special meaning for children, so she recommended religious education at this stage of education. She emphasized the importance of religious stories, stotras and Bhajans so that the children may develop the idea of God as a living Father, who has shared his life with us and with all things.

(ii) Intellectual Education:

Annie Besant wished that at this stage child must have a good foundation of knowledge of the Mother Tongue by reading and writing compositions. The teacher must tell stories and encourage his students to reproduce those stories in their own language. She wanted that children must be trained to observe simple objects and describe them.

In her system of education the knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali or Arabic, of only an elementary type, was essential for the children. She wrote "The classical languages of India, Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic should be taught from the standpoint

of modern teaching methods..... No declensions and rules should be taught at first. The child should first learn the names of the objects which surround him, then simple phrases concerning the life which he actually lives among these objects, leading on to simple conversation. Only after a real interest is aroused in the language as a spoken language should rules of grammar be begun".¹ Annie Besant seems to be a modern of the moderns so far as the teaching of language goes. In modern methods the teaching of grammar is not stressed at, as it is believed that grammar should not be taught but caught while reading or speaking a language.

Annie Besant liked to introduce English, to the children of elementary classes, by conversation and by teaching stories in easy english. In her educational scheme Nature study had a special place. For children the knowledge of life-history of plants and animals was considered essential and it was felt necessary that they may be appreciated for their observation and experiments concerning nature study. The teaching of history and geography by pictures of places in India and stories about them, the making of models and maps was enough for the children at this stage. In Arithmetic easy problems, Indian money, weights and measures, simple bills, simple geometry and measuring was quite enough.

In her system of education for elementary stage

1. Ibid. p.14.

Annie Besant wanted that children should plentifully use pictures and models, chosen carefully to develop the sense of form and colour and the application of beauty.

(iii) Moral Education:

To Annie Besant stories -- illustrating truth, devotion, courage, honour, fortitude etc. -- were very significant in providing moral education. Stories of all kinds have a great importance for children. So the teacher and parents were desired to collect stories of self-sacrifice; of duties to elders, equals and youngers; of kindness to animals and plants. By stories, Annie Besant believed that, the duty of service could be rightly inculcated in children.

(iv) Physical Education:

For the students of elementary classes, Annie Besant considered, Physical education very essential and useful. In her educational system we find she recommended the following physical activities for children: "Care of bodily cleanliness; value of healthy body; self-control; orderliness; reaction of anger, jealousy and other passions on health. Drawing and modelling. Gymnastic exercises. Breathing, elementary manual training".¹

While deciding on the kind of National Education, at elementary levels, for India Annie Besant wanted to introduce

1. Ibid. p.14.

that system of education which would provide a common education to all, of a very elementary character, so that, wrote Annie Besant "on this common foundation shall be built a large variety of curricula, each one suited for a particular class of workers"¹. To Annie Besant elementary education did not mean only the power of reading and writing. To her education was a complete reality when a traditional religious and moral teaching was handed down from elders to the younger, which trained and cultured the mind, though it did not teach the eyes to read, nor the fingers to write. She had a definite consideration for the rural society of India. She felt that there was a gentle wisdom which grew out of the dutiful labours of the household, the tilling of the soil, the necessary observation of the processes of nature, which lifted the village agriculturist far above the level of the dweller in a narrow bye-way of a crowded city.

Considering the situation in India Annie Besant emphasized the need of oral teaching in the elementary stage of education. Moreover a great need was felt, by her, of the village crafts which trained the fingers and exercised the intelligence, handicrafts was waiting for the slow processes of nature. She felt worried that the village crafts were diminishing in number and those who plied them in the villages

1. Annie Besant: 'The Common Basis of Education', in the C.H.C. Magazine, Jan. 1, 1913, pp. 14-15.

to the enhancement of village well-being and also of national prosperity were slowly being crushed out of existence.

An elementary school of Annie Besant's vision did need, she wrote, "little building, roofed in with leaves or thatch and with poles for walls, and hard-beaten earth for floor. A slate and pencil for every child. Some large printed sheets of letters, words and sentences in a graduated series. Two or three black-boards".¹

Annie Besant materialized her ideas in the form of some elementary schools which were established by her through T.E. Trust. These schools were fully based on Annie Besant's principles and methods of teaching and were scattered all over India. The influence of Annie Besant and her established schools can be easily seen on the modern educational system if we go to any modern school and find the important use of models, pictures, charts and other teaching aids while teaching lessons to the young children. To understand child nature and child psychology before giving any lesson to a child is also what Annie Besant taught and preached.

3. Higher Secondary Education; emphasis on diversification of courses; influence on the recommendations of Mudaliar Commission;

In the higher secondary system of education Annie Besant

1. Ibid. pp.15-16.

made a division -- the higher secondary education of classes VI, VII and VIII which we may better call middle school classes and higher classes IX and X -- so it would be better to explain her system as her own books speak about it.

The Higher Secondary Education:

In her system of education the first grounding of education occurs when the common elementary education is completed at about 9 or 10 years. Here child receives more advanced teaching of Mother-tongue -- literary and colloquial. Sanskrit, Pali or Arabic is also learnt. English becomes more accurate and fluently spoken or written by reading of simple modern stories with plenty of dialogue, letter writing, copying extracts of good modern authors.

In the curriculum the subjects like nature study, physical geography, Indian History and Indian Geography find a special place. Higher Mathematics is also included. The child does not get here elementary treatment with a subject but a thorough understanding is stressed at. While studying nature study some subjects like anatomy and physiology of human body, dissection of plants and their growth are studied as well.

The High School Education

Annie Besant regarded this stage mainly emotional but have a little need also of mental development. She wrote that at this stage "the education should be directed chiefly

to the training and control of emotions, so that when the period of puberty arrives the boy and girl may understand the broad facts of human physiology and may have gained a mental control of the emotions. The reasoning faculties are germinated and should be developed but not overstrained, the mental education being mainly the accumulation of facts, gained by observation and experiment, and the training of the memory by their co-ordination, the acquiring of languages, formulae, and the like -- studies which depend largely on memory".¹

The type of education gained during two years of high school life will to some extent depend upon the after career the child is expected to adopt. There will be a certain specialisation in the sense that according to Annie Besant there will be different high schools which will prepare students for different careers. On the other hand there will be certain subjects common to all High Schools.

The common subjects given by Annie Besant are the following "further instruction in the Mother-tongue. English, by composition, reading of suitable classical prose writers, e.g., Ruskin, and poets, and including readiness of expression in reading and writing. General science, including further physics and chemistry applied physical geography,

1. Principles of Education, Op.cit. p.6.

further anatomy and physiology of human body, with more detailed instruction in First Aid. Further Indian history and historical geography. Further algebra and geometry. A short course in elementary psychology"¹. Annie Besant thus includes the following to comprise the common subjects: (i) Mother-tongue, (ii) English - working knowledge only, (iii) General science - including physics, chemistry, physiology, physical geography etc., (iv) Mathematics, (v) General knowledge, particularly about India, (vi) Psychology - an elementary study.

Annie Besant included the following special subjects in the curricula of different High Schools according to the careers for which the high school was a preparation:-

(1) An Ordinary High School:

An ordinary high school of Annie Besant's Scheme was to have three divisions:-

(a) Arts Division:- Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali. A more specialized course in (a) Mother-tongue, (b) English, (c) Indian History and historical geography. History of the British Empire.

(b) Science Division:- Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali. A more specialized course in (a) Mother-tongue, (b) English (c) Physics, chemistry etc., (d) Algebra and Geometry, including Trigonometry and Mensuration, with the elements of

1. Ibid. p.16.

Surveying. Further Nature Study.

(c) Teachers' Division:- Pedagogy, further Psychology, School Management. A course in the Principles of Physical Training. Domestic Science. Where possible, practice in Teaching. Further Nature study.

(ii) A Commercial High School:

Commercially useful foreign languages, business forms, book-keeping, commercial arithmetic, office-methods, commercial law, type-writing and short-hand, commercial history and geography.

(iii) Domestic Science High School (For Girls):

Religious Education, knowledge of Sanitary laws, food supplies, cooking, simple medicines -- first aid and nursing household management, music, needlework, sewing, darning and cutting etc.

(iv) A Technical High School:

Same as in Science Division of an ordinary High School omitting Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali, and adding:

(a) Industrial History (b) Elementary Engineering (c) Mechanics, (d) Electricity.

(v) An Agricultural High School:

All subjects to be taught with special reference to their bearing upon rural daily life. Mathematics, including book-keeping, land-surveying and mensuration. Experimental Science (Physics and Chemistry) with special reference to

Agriculture. Elements of Mechanics with special reference to agricultural machines. Nature study and gardening. Elements of sanitation and engineering.

(vi) Art High Schools:

These schools might be useful for teaching music, drawing, painting etc.

While constructing the above mentioned courses Annie Besant did not mean to limit these schools only to the mentioned subjects, her indication was to give an outline of the kind of education needed in her time by the Indians. She wrote "The various subjects should not only be taught from the point of view of their value to the individual, but equally with reference to their constructive value as regards the growth of the Nation".¹

By recommending two kinds of courses -- common subjects and the special subjects -- Annie Besant wanted to have a diversification of courses so that education of the children may agree with their interests, needs and psychological nature and prepare them vocationally so that their education may become a process of fitting "round pegs in round holes".

In her scheme the first bifurcation of education takes place when the common elementary education is completed. Those children who feel interested or whose mental make up

1. Principles of Education, Op.cit. p.18.

does not allow to take up literary, scientific, commercial life must not join a secondary school, for them Annie Besant recommended the training for handicrafts and lowest official work. She was not in favour of admitting all the children in

Common Primary Education

Training for handicrafts and lowest official work (policemen etc.)

Secondary education (leading to professions, arts, trades and the organization of industries).

the secondary schools after completing primary education. She wrote "Secondary education -- in which I include higher non-collegiate education -- should be the commencement of the training necessary as the basis of literary, scientific, artistic and commercial life. It is not for the boys and girls whose future lies in the handicrafts, in agriculture, in domestic and small shop-assistant service, in factories, in the lowest ranks of the petty officials -- policemen, soldiers, office-peons, chowkidars, and the like. It should carry boys and girls upto the ordinary university matriculation, and should not divide into different branches before that age. All should have the literary, scientific, artistic and commercial education necessary for the general useful life of the lower middle class, which includes small shop-

keepers, assistants in large shops, clerks in ordinary business offices and the like. Specialization in literature, science, art and commerce should be post-matriculation, so that the members of the lower middle class should have minds open to the higher intellectual and artistic influences and apt to respond to them".¹

Annie Besant also recommends a special preparatory class for college careers. We may call it the 11th year class of a Higher Secondary School or an elective class or a Pre-university class. Annie Besant writes about this class that "Attached to each High School there will be a preparatory class for students proceeding to the university. The University will comprise all types of colleges -- business, agricultural, arts, science, teachers' training, etc. -- and in the various preparatory classes the students will be grounded in such special knowledge as may be required to be known before they begin the three year's college course. These special classes lead to the Entrance Examination to be conducted jointly by the University authorities and selected members of the various school staff".²

The system of higher Secondary Education which was planned by Annie Besant has put a remarkable influence on the

1. Annie Besant: "Secondary Education" given in the C.H.C. Magazine, 1st February 1913, pp.44-45.

2. Principles of Education, Op.cit. p.18.

modern system of Higher Secondary education. The diversified courses of the Higher Secondary stage which were drafted by Annie Besant in her book "Principles of Education " published in 1918, tally very much with the recommendations of Mudaliar Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53. Where the Report of the Commission tells that "The courses in the High Schools and the Higher Schools..... will consist of certain core-subjects commonly to all and certain optional subjects. The difference in the period of education makes it necessary to have two levels of integration of the subject matter with the core subjects as well as the optional subjects..... The need for developing an integrated course is so great that we have preferred to group subjects under certain broad headings in order to allow for some amount of integration".¹

The broad outlines of the curriculum are drawn by the Secondary Education Commission show the following:

- A (i) Mother-tongue or Regional language or a composite course of the Mother-tongue and a classical language.
- (ii) One other language to be chosen from among the following:-
 - (a) Hindi (for those whose mother-tongue is not Hindi).
 - (b) Elementary English (for those who have not studied in the Middle stage).

1. Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, "Report of the Secondary Education Commission", p.70.

(c) Advanced English (for those who had studied English in the earlier stage).

(d) A modern Indian language (other than Hindi).

(e) A modern foreign language (other than English).

(f) A classical language.

B (i) Social Studies -- general course (for the first two years only).

(ii) General Science including Mathematics -- general course (for the first two years only).

C. One Craft to be chosen from the following list (which may be added to, according to needs):-

(a) Spinning and Weaving, (b) Wood-work, (c) Metal work, (d) Gardening (e) Tailoring (f) Typography (g) Workshop Practice, (h) Sewing, Needle work and Embroidery, (i) Modelling.

D. One of the following Groups:-

(1) Humanities, (2) Science, (3) Technical (4) Commercial, (5) Agriculture (6) Fine Arts and (7) Home Science.

The curriculum recommended by the Higher Secondary Education Commission if placed side by side with the scheme of education of Annie Besant will make quite clear to us that The Secondary Education Commission had been influenced deeply by Annie Besant and had only brought-forth a revised carbon copy of Annie Besant's draft of curricula. Prof. Trilokkar is right when he wrote that she had a foresight to see ahead

of her times in all the fields of Indian life.¹ In her scheme of secondary education the diversification of courses which were worked by her in 1918 to 1925 in her National School, had attracted Dr. L.Mudaliar, the Chairman, Board of Secondary Education Commission and the other members to recommend the scheme of diversified courses for the new pattern of Secondary Education.

4. Rural Education: emphasis on the Rural environment:
influence on the recommendations of Radhakrishnan
University Commission:

Of all the problems that India faced in the time of Annie Besant, there was probably none so pressing, none so urgent, as the problem of rural education. Annie Besant fully realized that cities did not represent India, real India was in the villages, and cities had been exploiting the villages and lived on them. Hence Annie Besant felt it most urgent to work for the rural reconstruction and rural education.

Emphasising the importance of village education, she wrote: "Indian education did not die when the white Huns destroyed the great University of Takshashila in A.D. 455. Indian education did not die when the Muslims with their horror of images destroyed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries both Hindu and Buddhist Universities that contained

1. "Of Pattern of Things to come, Op.cit. p.v.

them. Indian education did not die in these two great destructions, because universities might come and go, but the village system, the roots and trunk still lived. Indian education was not meant to die when Britain came to India, for the design which has been partially fulfilled was that the youngest son should disseminate far and wide the glory of the Mother of the National of the World. Indian education perished only when the Village system with its industries, its common ownership in land, and co-operative endeavours, its education in the mother-tongues was destroyed".¹

Annie Besant was confident that Indian education could only live when it was again rooted in the very soil of the Indian village. She wrote articles, delivered lectures, prepared tracts to impress upon the Britishers to allow village system to work on its lines. She wrote in an article that "Restore the Village Panchayat or small Republic -- that truest of all democracies, give back to the village its land, and its power to deal with its own internal problems, and again will there grow up generations of young Indians trained in an education of the hand, the heart, and the head, through which will be expressed the heritage of the Motherland: Creative spirituality".²

1. Annie Besant (Ed.) "New India" of 18 August 1928, p.6.

2. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, Op.cit. p.39.

For the village schools, Annie Besant, wished to emphasize the rural environment so that a natural system may take place. She did not want that the schools of villages may become a true carbon copies of the city schools. In her scheme of rural education, which she explained in her book 'Principles of Education', she wrote that "Schools in small villages need to be arranged in a fashion somewhat different from those which are intended to send their pupils on into Secondary and High Schools. The Village School is usually all the School the boys and girls enjoy, save in the exceptional cases of brilliant pupils".¹

To Annie Besant, the education of the village boys and girls was a great necessity because only by education every problem of the village could be solved. For the understanding of one's interests and for the solution of the commercial backwardness and for lifting the villagers from the unhappy social conditions, education was the only important need for the uneducated villagers. So while explaining her line of thought about rural education Annie Besant said "We must have a village school, a school in every village, and attached to that a technical school of the simplest and most elementary kind. My reason for suggesting that to every village school there should also be attached, to put it practically, a weaving shed,

1. Principles of Education, Op.cit. p.19.

a carpenter's shop, a black-smith's forge..... in dealing with the work of village education, you should put before the boys, you educate, ways of increasing the wealth of their country while they earn their own livelihood, and to that end we should have the simplest possible technical education side by side with the school wherein reading, writing and arithmetic are taught. Then after that, I submit, should come your secondary schools, teaching upto matriculation..... there you should also have a higher technical school, dealing more with the artisan, with the trade which needs skill, with all metal working, with all the finer kinds of productive industry, and attached to that, inevitably, something of scientific teaching; for the work of the artisan insensibly glides into the work of the Scientist, and you must have in your secondary technical school some teaching in science as applied to the various forms of manufacture".¹

The village school, which Annie Besant proposed, started its day's work with the singing of a bhajan by the children and a short prayer. After prayer the usual work began which was the same as has been explained while describing elementary stage, in the beginning of this chapter. The speciality of the village school was that of the emphasis on the rural environment Annie Besant wrote: "A lesson on flowers, leaves,

1. Annie Besant: "Wake up, India: A Plea for Social Reform", pp.172-73.

grains, seeds, animals, brought by the children, to be chatted over. Geography by a map of the village in damp sand, fields, houses, well, tank, temple, and the paths and roads leading away to other places. Gardens, how to prepare the soil, to sow, to weed, to water, to train plants. On wet days the making of baskets, learning to sew, to knot, to drive in a nail, a screw, to mend utensils, etc.

"At 8 or 9 years of age, half the school time should be spent in the working sheds attached to the school, where the village trades should be taught. The gardens lead up to agriculture, to be taught in land set apart; in the school, the growth of the plant, why it drains the soil, and how to make the loss good; in the field, examples of plants in manured and exhausted soil. How to dig deeply, to graft, to prune. The care of animals, and kindness to them, will be part of the training. The Carpenter's shed takes some of the boys, and they learn to make tools and simple articles used in the village. Others to the weaving shed, learning the use of simple improvement that increase output.

"Both boys and girls from about 10 should learn how to bind up a cut where and how to put on a ligature to check dangerous bleeding, how to bandage a sprained wrist and ankle, how to make and apply a poultice, what to do in cases of the bite of a dog, horse or snake, the sting of a scorpion, hornet or wasp, a bad scratch, a burn. The need of scrupulous

cleanliness in all dressing of wounds.

"Sanitation, domestic hygiene, cookery, washing, house-cleaning, should be learned and practised by the girls, while the boys are in the work-sheds".¹

The elementary rural education, as planned by Annie Besant, was universal and from it all manual occupations were branched out, which included: agriculture, handicrafts and domestic service and the village boys were desired to master them theoretically and practically -- theoretically, in village technical schools; practically, in apprenticeship to the skilled workmen in each craft.

Let us consider how Annie Besant planned the working of the rural education system:-

1. Agriculture: In India agriculture was the craft of crafts. Annie Besant did not approve of the appointment of a highly paid teacher for agriculture. She wrote "The village technical school needs no highly paid teachers. Its head should be the eldest son of the Zemindar, who should direct, and should supply the modern scientific knowledge..... He should be a voluntary worker..... The instruction given should be suitable part of the information..... the natural history of the place, the useful and mischievous birds, the insects, the diseases of plants, the signs of the inroad of parasites, the

1. 'Principles of Education', Op.cit. pp.19-20.

ways of distinguished good and bad seeds, the eradication of weeds, etc. All these should be learned by the village boy as apprentice to an older workman, who should train him practically in the various departments of agricultural work -- the use of tools, the feeding, the tendance of cattle, the milking of cows, the treatment of minor ailments of animals, and the like".¹

Annie Besant was not contented only with the elementary rural education. She had a definite plans for secondary and college education for rural crafts. She recommended to the opening of the Agricultural Colleges in every district or province which would be supported by the big Zemindars and small Zemindars jointly. She wrote "Every large Zemindary should have a model farm..... In this farm, discoveries made in the college should be tested on a larger scale; experiments in the breeding of plants and animals should be made, so that improved seeds may be distributed among the villagers, and stud stock lent out to improve their breeds of cattle. So again, experiments in the crops suited to various soils, in the kinds of manure best for each, in the cultivation of fruits, and the improvements of inferior stock by budding and grafting -- all these should be made in the model farm, and the results distributed. Promising boys from the villages might also be sent there for special training, and thus the

1. Annie Besant: "Education for India" an article in C.H.C. Magazine of April, 1913, pp. 96-97.

the village level of knowledge would be gradually raised".¹ Thus Annie Besant's plan of rural education provided agricultural training from elementary village school to the highest training in a college.

2. Weaving: In rural reconstruction weaving, as one of the most famous crafts of village, has an important place. In Annie Besant's scheme of rural education weaving had not been ignored. Her stay in Benares, Madras and Kashmir had enabled her to study the working of weaving handicraft to which a large number of interested village students had gone, squatting on the floor, with a clumsy wooden framework in front of them and practising weaving the wondrous fabrics of gold and silver.

Annie Besant had visualized the slow process of decline going on in the waving trade due to imported products from foreign mills which resulted in the ruin of Indian weaving trade. Annie Besant gave a special place of weaving in her scheme of rural education by reviving the village handicrafts and placing them in her curricula.

3. Spinning and Dyeing: In her plan of rural education, Annie Besant gave an important place to spinning and dyeing. She recommended the inclusion of this subject in the village schools where the vegetable dyes may be used by the children.

1. Ibid. p.97.

She did not like to see Indians using aniline dyes, imported from England, with their crude and glaring colours which undermined the exquisitely soft hues obtained from roots and stems. She breathed a sigh of pleasure when Maharaja Partap Singh had forbidden the entry, into his state Jammu & Kashmir of aniline dyes.

Annie Besant introduced the subject of spinning and dyeing in her scheme, for fully reviving them before these had passed into death, due to the neck-break competition with the British factories.

Thus Annie Besant was able to plan a scheme of rural education for solving the educational need of the majority of population living in the villages of India.

Her plan of rural education had influenced to a very great extent, the Radhakrishnan University Commission's recommendations. We can find a glimpse of Annie Besant's influence when we read the University's Commission's report as: "Small scale farming by efficient labour needed at present, and production may be greatly increased. Much of the village population will be available for work other than agriculture A large part of the industry of the country should be located in villages"¹.

The Radhakrishnan Commission recommended a very comprehensive scheme for rural education which included -- a system

1. Radhakrishnan, Dr.S.(Chairman): The Report of the University Education Commission (Dec.1948-Aug. 1949) Volume I, p.557.

of basic craft education for the Primary stage, the Rural Secondary Schools for Secondary stage, Rural colleges for College stage and Rural Universities for University stage of education. That what Annie Besant had planned and implemented in the first decade of the 20th century, had been visualised half a century after, but no doubt in a better systematic form. Annie Besant did not explain the details of her scheme of rural education in a way that we find in the report of University Commission. We might say that Annie Besant's approach to solve the problem of rural reconstruction was dealt with single-handedly when the University Commission had developed its scheme with the joint collaboration of the Indian and foreign experts of education and financed and supported by the Government of India. But even then Annie Besant's scheme still has its utility, though great progress has been made in the system of modern education. She recommended that Panchayat should manage the rural schools, thus giving the management and supervision of the rural schools in the hands of the local elders of the village itself but on the other hand the University Commission recommended that rural education should be managed by the education department which has no direct links with the village population at all.

Thus, though Annie Besant's scheme of rural education was not explained by her in details but it seems today that

her understanding of the problems and needs of the village society was very great, which enabled her to plan an acceptable scheme of rural education which has a great utility not only for the village school masters but even for the experts working on the problems and solutions of rural education.

5. Education of Women, its importance and essentials:

We have already explained Annie Besant's scheme of women education in the preceding chapter. It is sufficient to note here that Annie Besant felt that no country could rise high among the Nations of the world, unless its men and its women work together for its uplift.

When Annie Besant came to India, in 1893, there were no proper arrangements for giving women education. She wrote articles in favour of women education. In one of the articles she wrote: "Women must be educated; that is her fundamental need; the treasures of philosophy, literature, science, art, must be thrown open to her as to men. There should be no storehouses of knowledge, locked by the key of sex. The Woman Sage is wanted as well as the Woman Saint, and Women's wisdom as well as men's is needed to dig deeply and build strongly the foundations of the New India".¹ Writing early in 1901 in a letter to one of her close friends, Mrs. Esther Bright, Annie Besant had remarked "As soon as the Hindu

1. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, Op.cit. p.355.

College is secure, I am going to open one for girls and try to raise the women. See what an ambitious.....creature I am".¹

On February 21, 1903 Miss Francesea Arundale along with her adopted son, George S. Arundale arrived in Benares for a permanent stay in India. Annie Besant found a great educationist in Miss Arundale who had a great fire in her for work for women education. After consultation with Miss Arundale she did feel safe in going on with her plan of women education. At the meeting of C.H.C., Council in April 1904, when Annie Besant was re-elected President of the Board of the Trustees of the C.H.C., she was also elected chairman of a provincial committee to organize and develop a Central Hindu Girls' School along the lines of a 1904 pamphlet of hers "The Education of Indian Girls", based on the necessary modification in the current operation of the boys' school. By July 1904 the C.H.C. Magazine was able to report that the walls of the new girls school were beginning to rise, but that more widespread national support was necessary. It was later revealed that Miss Arundale, who was the first honorary principal, was also its main financial support.

Though the Central Hindu Girls' School never revealed the C.H. College in fame, fortune or future, but it was one of the first in the movement to emancipate Indian women educationally and as Sri Prakasha wrote about Annie Besant's work

1. Sri Prakasa: "Annie Besant: As woman and as Leader", p.28.

1. Bright, Esther: 'Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant', p.80.

for women education "She established Girls' schools which.... brought women out of the shell into which they had gone, and which helped also in the removal of pardah..... which was so harmful for the growth, both of womanhood and nationhood".¹ So it would be right to say that Annie Besant was a fighting pioneer in the field of women education.

To her, women education was a very important issue because it directly concerned with the good of the nation because on it depended the welfare of the family and largely the welfare of the whole nation. She did not intend to introduce the western education system in the girls schools, which would have been, to use her own words "mischievous rather than beneficial to Indian womanhood", she wrote: To introduce a system suited to one country into another where the social conditions are entirely different is to act blindly and foolishly, without any consideration of the objects education is intended to subserve. Education should fit the person educated for the function he or she is to discharge in later life; if it fail to do this, it may be book-learning but it is not education".²

Annie Besant wanted to introduce those essentials of education for the women of India which would help them to

1. Sri Prakasa: "Annie Besant: As Woman and as Leader", p.28.

2. Annie Besant: "The Education of Hindu Youth" (an article contributed to the Theosophist of March 1897) compiled in 'The Birth of New India', p.112

enrich family life. In her times there was no prospect of a revolution in the social life, driving the women into the world to earn bread and become competitors with men in every walk of life. The province of women in India was still the home. Their life was only devoted to the family and for such a life Annie Besant wanted to introduce that essentials of education which would suit the social life of India. For such education she believed that the school-life of the girl in India must necessarily be brief and it was therefore the more important that she should spend that brief time to the best possible advantage.

Annie Besant planned a suitable course for Indian girls to suit their future needs in home and society. She wrote: "The Indian girl should learn to read and write her vernacular, and the books used should for the most part be translated from the most attractive Sanskrit books, the great epics and dramas of her country. The course of reading mapped out should give her an elementary acquaintance with Indian literature, history and geography, serving as the basis for future study. It might also, in the higher classes, include the broad outlines of universal history and geography and of the greatest literary masterpieces of foreign nations. She should be given a sound knowledge of arithmetic so continually needed by the manager of the household. She should be taught thoroughly the "science of common life", the value of food-stuffs, the necessary consti-

tudents of a healthy diet, the laws of health of the body, and for the house she should be thoroughly instructed in medicinal botany, the preparation and use of herbs, the treatment of all simple forms of disease, of simple surgical cases, and of accidents of various kinds. In the higher classes Sanskrit should be taught, so that the vast stores of the noble literature of India should be opened to her daughters. A knowledge of music, including playing on the vina and singing, is most desirable, as well as a thorough acquaintance with such needlework as is wanted in the home; the teaching of artistic needlework is also useful, forming a pleasant recreation".¹

She further wrote "Above all else must the Indian girls be trained in the devotion and piety to which her nature so readily responds. Not only should she read, but she should learn by heart, stories and poems from the best Indian literature, stotras and sacred verses. No girl should leave school without becoming familiar with the Bhagavad Gita, and knowing much, if not all of it, by heart. All the great heroines of Indian story should be made familiar to her, with their inspiring example and elevating influence. The Indian ideal of womanhood should be made living to her in those heroic figures, and she should be taught to regard them as her

1. Ibid, pp.114-115.

examples in her own life..... Girls thus educated will made the Indian home what it ought to be -- the centre of spirituality, the strength of the national religious life".¹

Annie Besant implemented her scheme of women education in all the girls' institutions opened by her throughout India. She started women hostels and boarding houses for girls who could not find all the teaching they required within reach of their parents' homes. Annie Besant made plans for the higher education of the Indian girls which materialized when she established the Vasantashrama in 1914 and Vasanta College in 1916 where higher education was provided to the Hindu girls, thus meeting the crying need of India of the early years of the 20th century.

6. Education in Fine Arts: importance of reviving the traditions of ancient Indian Art: influence on Kalakshetra founded in Madras by Lukmini Devi:

In the plan of education drafted by Annie Besant, the education in fine arts held an important and remarkable place in it. The scheme of National Education of Annie Besant recommended the opening of an Art High School, along with other High Schools preparing for different professions, where subjects covering different forms of art were proposed to be taught. She intended to introduce in her art school different

1. Ibid, p.115.

forms of art, such as music, drawing, painting, sculptoring, literature and architecture.

But in the schools which she planned and established throughout India, for the education of the girls and women, the education in fine arts was allotted a very high and important place in them. She introduced those subjects which she believed very useful for the girls. Explaining the subjects, she wrote: "Instruction in some art should form part of the education for a girl, so that leisure in later life may be pleasantly and adequately filled..... The singing of stotras to an accompaniment on the vina, or other instruments, is a refining and delightful art in which the girls take the greatest pleasure, and one which enables them to add greatly to the charm of home. Drawing and painting are arts in which some find delight and their deft fingers readily learn.....artistic embroidery and needlework of all kinds".¹

Art had been given a very high place in the life of a child by Annie Besant. She firmly believed that in the shaping of the nation's growth and making it to reach a full-orbed greatness the importance and influence of education in arts could never be denied. To her, the art of a nation was the expression of that nation's conception of the Beautiful, of its love of harmony, proportion and order. Appreciating

1. Annie Besant: "The Education of Indian Girls", p.8.

the great value of art Annie Besant wrote that art always "refines and polishes a nation, gives it dignity and grace and self-restraint. Inevitably vulgar becomes the nation which has no true art..... There passion changes to brutality, and love puts on the hideous mark of lust".¹ For the education of children Annie Besant considered the study of art, in its different forms, as a very important subject of study. To her art in India showed out the soul of India and it showed itself in different forms.

She had a great appreciation for Indian art, and especially for painting, for which she gave a theory of art, She wrote "The theory that I propound is that the art of the copyist, even most perfect copyist of Nature, is not the highest art in painting, that there is an art beyond it which is the creative Art, which shows to us, who cannot see it for ourselves, what the artist sees when he looks through the outer form at the idea which is embodied in the form..... In every form a divine thought is expressed. Flower, animal and mineral, are the expressions of the thought-word which exists in the divine mind. From the divine mind ideas are built in physical matter by these minute artificers. In as much as these tiny artificers are less developed than the human being, the thought which they are able to express through the outer form, however,

1. Annie Besant: The Necessity For Religious Education, a lecture compiled in the 'Birth of New India', p.130.

beautiful is, only a portion of the divine thought which they embody, and a true artist is the man who, by virtue of his genius, sees more of the divine thought in the object than an ordinary man can see..... and so paints not merely the outer form but the inner thought greater than the form, and the enables us to see it".¹ That was the theory of art, which though was propounded for painting only but, which covered all the other forms of art approved by Annie Besant for the Indian students.

Annie Besant was not an artist herself but she was a true student of art having a special training in her girlhood in different forms of art, such as painting, music and dancing, which made her a great worshipper of Beauty and of the Beautiful. To her, art appeared to be the mid-way, the spear head of Education inspired by religion. She, while considering the subject of art, took a universal metaphysical viewpoint of art namely, that all manifestations of life could not exist without the Divine Artist behind them. In her 'Kamala lecture' on Art she said "It is the Philosophy of Hindu India that her Ideals of Beauty are firmly rooted, and in Art, as in all manifestations of the Divine Life, it is the Cosmic Ideation, the creative activity of the Divine Thought which -- bodying itself forth in subtlest matter in

1. Annie Besant: "Speciality of Indian Art" a talk on 22nd February 1916, while opening the Exhibition of Paintings and Pictures of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, given in 'New India', February 23, 1916, p. 3.

which Sattva, Harmony, predominates over Tamas and Rajas -- imposes Beauty, which is due to the inter-harmonious relation between all parts of every form, that is the essential characteristic of every Type-Idea or Arche-type, whence all special forms belonging to that Arche-type are generated".¹

Annie Besant believed that the activity of the Divine Artist had been compartmentalized into the Truth, the Godness and the Beauty or as Satyanm, Shivan and Sundaram, though in itself He was considered as a totality -- a complete whole. Every activity in unison with the one Universal Life was necessarily partake of all these combined elements, and in that sense the three epithets or terms were synonymous and interchangeable. The aim and goal of life was to press in this direction. Towards that consummation all things were considered to be moving.

To help every individual to be an integrated personality was considered by Annie Besant as the goal and ideal both of religion and Education, hence this factor of art had played a very important part in the life of an individual. Hence its supreme value and worth had been attached to scheme of her education. Annie Besant considered that art had a special place in the religion of an individual. In her lecture on 'Religion and music', as one of the form of

1. Annie Besant: Indian Ideals in Education, Philosophy and Religion, and art (Kamala Lectures) p.94.

art, she said that "Music is verily an expression of the Divine Beauty, and is a worthy object for the study of a life time..... Music -- addressed especially to the emotions as it is --- is found to be most useful, at least as a preliminary exercise, and seems to enable the mind to rise from the physical plane, and to soar upwards into the higher regions of consciousness, more easily than would be possible without its aid".¹ The same was true about other forms of art to Annie Besant. She understood that for the whole run of humanity, in the present times and in the future as well, the expression through different forms of art was far the easiest, along the line of least resistance, a technique and method to round off or mould an all-round personality.

To start with the sense the being aware of the presence of the beautiful instinctively and naturally was one of the greatest of blessings which Annie Besant considered as a good thing of life. But it had to be and needed to be cultivated. As an educationist she made very powerful attempts, through her writings and lectures, to awaken the sensibility to Art in all the young people and sundry, to introduce them with the most crying need of her times. Annie Besant based her theory of art on the development of various senses of a man. She explained this thesis that the organs of the

1. Annie Besant: "Religion and Music" a lecture delivered to the Shri Parthasarathi Svami Sabha Triplican, Madras on March 7th, 1908, pp.1,2.

human personality which enable a man to start on this search are the senses, the doors and windows through which we contact our environment. The five senses; hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell; require to be refined, polished and made clear. They are called, in Hindu shastras, as Gynany-endriyaas, the senses for the knowledge and with their functioning the life is heightened and beautified by a chastened use of every one of these senses. She wanted to train and develop the senses of the children so that the artistic nature would be cultivated. She did not envisage the education of an artist alone, apart and exclusive, through the cultivation of senses. To her the chief purpose of art education was to evoke a cultured attitude towards life -- a factor pre-eminently neglected in education before she wrote her scheme of education -- the whole field of knowledge needed to be scanned to enable the spot-light of Art to reveal the inner beauty of the subject in hand.

Annie Besant wanted to achieve a world-citizenship through the use of art. She believed that a constant emphasis on the supreme necessity of Arts in one's make up, whether one is a student or an ordinary man, would go a long way in the bringing up of a personality of refinement and culture, of simplicity and dignity.

In the Kamala lectures, delivered by Annie Besant in

the Calcutta University, she had enunciated certain rules for the guidance of all nations in the domain of Art, and had outlined the national policy that might be followed in the department of this particular activity. In her opinion the key-note of the next step in human civilization would be art. She opined that there could never be true democracy without art and in order that a nation might fulfil its mission it had to recognize that art was not only for the rich but also for the poor. This would create a community of the lovers of Art, and through them would establish in the world, an Empire of Art. Thus, there would be built the temples where the Goddess of Beauty would be worshipped as an emblem of the Shakti of Ishwara. To find beauty of her words let us quote her, when she said: "Art is the international language, in which mind can speak to mind, heart to heart, where limbs are dumb. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music, these need no translations, they speak the universal Mother-tongue, centuries do not age them. Custom does not stale them. Boundaries do not exist for them. Their message is for every country, for every tongue. Art will permeate the whole atmosphere of the New-civilization which is on the threshold".¹

Annie Besant considered the revival of the traditions of ancient Indian art as the most important need of the time. She wrote many articles in favour of it and her many lectures were for the encouragement of the artists who had done so.

She was greatly impressed by the birth of the Bengal School

1. Kamala Lectures, Op.cit. p.124.

of Painting and about that School she wrote: "The revival and advance of true Indian Art Ideals, in the renaissance identified with the gifted family of true Artists, the Tagores..... nurses in its bosom the rightful Heir of the heritage of India's Art Ideals in the Past, the infant who, in the future, in the maturity of India's Art Ideals, shall give to the world the priceless gift of an Art which shall redeem it alike from materialism and superstition, and shall make the life of the Nation and the life of the individual full of Beauty".¹

Annie Besant wanted to revive the ancient Indian art traditions, for which she founded in 1921 a club at the Gokhale Hall in Madras, she opened an Art Section and regularly attended the meetings. She was always the gracious hostess of many world famous Indian artists like Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Harindaranath Chottapadhyaya and many others. She encouraged exhibitions of Indian painting everywhere and gave support to all who worked for this cause. She wrote reviews on different forms of art and books on art and thus popularized the Indian art and ancient Indian art traditions in India and the world. In this way Annie Besant was a mother of many Art movements in India, and specially the birth of Kalakshetra itself owes its origin to her.

1. Kamala Lectures, Op.cit. p.123.

Annie Besant encouraged Rukmini Devi to establish a Centre of Art in order that Indian art may once again be revived and its ancient culture may be developed. In 1936 Rukmini Devi started the Kalakshetra which literally means (Kala-Arts, Kshetra -- Field or Holy place) a Holy place of Arts. This institution seeks to build up the character of the young through the Arts and to create a true Centre of International Understanding through the one Universal language -- Art.

Kalakshetra has the following ideals, which are taken from different lectures of Annie Besant, such as given in each issue of the journal "Kalakshetra:-

1. "Art is an attempt to bring down within the vision of ordinary mortals some of the Divine Beauty of which the artist catches glimpses, strives to translate these into colours, sounds, forms, words, by creating pictures, melodies, sculptures, poems and other literature.
2. "Beauty diversified into the arts is the true refiner and uplifter of humanity. It is the instrument of culture, the broadener of the heart, the purifying fire which burns all prejudices, all pettiness, all coarseness. Without it, true democracy is impossible, equality of social intercourse an empty dream.
3. "Art is the international language in which mind can speak to mind, heart to heart, where lips are dumb.

The arts need no translations, they speak the universal mother-tongue. Centuries do not age them. Their message is for every country, for every tongue. Art will permeate the whole atmosphere of the New Civilization which is on the threshold".¹

Since its foundation in 1936 by Kulkarni Devi, the influence of Kalakshetra and the scope of its work have greatly increased. The activity of Kalakshetra has been four-fold:-

- "1. To educate boys and girls with talent in the great traditions of Indian Art, so that they become professional artists of quality.
2. To permeate general education with the influence of art and culture.
3. To educate public taste in matters of art through performances, demonstrations, lectures and exhibitions, and,
4. To encourage and preserve the beautiful crafts of India.".²

To fulfill the first two of these activities the institution has gathered round it the greatest artists of India, so that the young people who are being trained may grow up under the most eminent teachers.

1. Kalakshetra: A quarterly magazine, of January 1965, p.53.

2. Kalakshetra, Prospectus 1966-67, p.9.

Rukmini Devi's aim has been to create the atmosphere of a true Gurukula in Kalakshetra and life in that institution centres round this ideal. Today Kalakshetra has become one of the great art institutions of India and is the outward symbol of a new growth of the cultural life of the nation. Its achievements in the field of art and culture are significant and varied during the period of 34 years since its establishment. The various activities, which has been carried out in the Kalakshetra are in pursuance of the following basic ideals:-

- "(a) to emphasize the essential unity of all true art; and
- (b) to work for the recognition of the arts as vital to individual, national, religious and international growth".¹

In the college of Fine Arts which Kalakshetra has been running the arts of music, dance, painting and crafts are taught to the young children of both sexes. In the art education imparted in this college Rukmini Devi takes full care to maintain the classical purity and the beauty of spirit embodied in the art traditions of India.

Students come to Kalakshetra from all parts of India and even from other countries, lead simple Indian lives and learn the full meaning of art as an aspect of inspiration and expression. This has been made possible because out-

1. Kalakshetra Art Festival Issue (1964), p.4.

standing masters of art have lived and still continue to live in Kalakshetra, giving to the teaching of the young their whole hearts and gifts. Only the medium of sympathetic contact of master and pupil can do this.

7. Technical Education:

Annie Besant was very much alive to the needs of Technical Education for the Indian students. In her scheme of National education she had recommended a Technical High School, along with other schools teaching different subjects according to the careers aimed at. In the Technical School she recommended the study of Technical subjects such as Industrial history, Electricity, Mechanics etc;. In her C.H.C. she had also introduced some Technical subjects, which we have already seen while discussing her scheme of education in the C.H.C., Through her lectures and writings she had taken up and pressed in the utility of Technical Education for the Indians.

But she was greatly worried about the employment of the technically trained Indians. She said in her lecture, entitled National Education, delivered in Bombay on April 17th 1914, "It is no good to educate your boys technically unless you employ them after the education has been gained. Now there lies one of our great difficulties. Many of your boys have gone abroad. They have studied Electrical Engineering, they have studied Civil Engineering they have taken

up studies in glass-making, and many other industries..... They have faced all the difficulties -- you know what they are -- of return after foreign travel. They have come back ready to take up work in their Motherland, and they cannot find employment."¹

In the last decades of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century, in order to please their British bosses of the English government, good technical posts with very fat pays were given only to the Englishmen by the Indian owners of the factories and if Indians, with the same qualification, were ever appointed on the same post, they were given a very low pay. Annie Besant was very critical to such like illogical injustice, of ignoring Indians and employing the Englishmen. She said "I can understand..... paying an Englishman more when he has been technically well educated and the Indian young man has not, but when the Indian Young man has gained the same education, when he has passed through the same drill and teaching, and when he returns to his country fully equipped with the technical training he has passed through, why do you choose the Englishman? Why is it said that the Indians must not apply for the larger and more responsible posts where men have to be organised and where a large business has to be controlled".²

1. Annie Besant: National Education, a lecture compiled in the Birth of New India, p.184.

2. Ibid, pp.184-185.

Annie Besant wrote many articles and delivered lectures to make the Indian princes, Indian nobles and wealthy men to realize their duty towards the technically trained English-educated Indians who had gone abroad to study and had come back practically to starve. She wanted Indian wealthy men to start industries and factories where technically trained persons would find their employment thus helping the progress and prosperity of the country.

8. Teacher Education:

Annie Besant was in favour of Teacher's training before they are appointed in any institution. She herself had qualified as a science teacher in 1879 in eight different subjects -- Inorganic Chemistry, Animal Physiology, General Biology, Botany, Acoustics, Light and Heat, Theoretical Mechanics, Magnetism and Electricity, and Mathematics. She wrote in her autobiography about her training as a teacher "Personally..... this study and teaching together with attendance at classes held for teachers at South Kensington.. puzzled me not a little at the time as I had passed a far more difficult practical chemical examination for teachers at South Kensington -- all this gave me a knowledge of science that has..... stood me in good stead in my....work".¹ for the cause of education in later years.

1. Annie Besant: An Autobiography, p.348.

She had established a teacher's college in C.H.C. for training Sanskrit teachers in 1900 and in 1918, when she drafted her scheme of National Education, she recommended a teacher's course to be run as one of the special courses in her scheme of diversification of courses. Under the Teacher's division she approved the teaching of subjects such as "Pedagogy, further Psychology, School Management. A course in the principles of Physical Training, Domestic Science, where possible, practice in Teaching. Further Nature Study".¹

But for the National Training College, established in Sudder Gardens, Teynampet, Madras, for the Teachers, she had planned to provide two courses -- (i) a one year's course qualifying the successful student for a special diploma and to take charge of an elementary school, and (ii) the college class course in teaching leading to the admission examination to the National University and hence to a degree in teaching after three years in the Training College.

The One Year's Course: This course planned by Annie Besant was as follows:-

- "1. Indian Citizenship
 2. Physical Culture including the theory and practice of physical culture for the elementary school classes (class I to VI)
-

1. Annie Principles of Education, Op.cit.p.17.

3. The History, Theory and Practice of Education -- an elementary Survey.

4. Instruction in the methods of teaching and subjects of instruction in an elementary school".¹

Arrangements had also been made to give the students instruction in their religious faith.

Only those candidates were admitted in this course who had passed the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination, and except in cases specially sanctioned by the Principal. Only 30 students had been admitted in 1918 in this course but the number of seats increased when the new arrangements were made in the subsequent years.

The Three Years Course: This course led to the degree of B.T. The aim with which this course in Teaching had been drawn up had been to impress those who had determined to serve the country through the profession of teaching both with the importance and dignity of the service and with its almost overwhelming responsibility. The examination of B.T. was both a written and an oral examination and was both theoretical and practical. The candidates were examined in:-

(1) Indian Citizenship, (2) Physical Culture, (3) The History, Theory and Practice of Education, and (4) A special subject, which formed a subject of instruction in the School department.

1. Annie Besant: The National Training College, Madras, New India of July 26, 1918, p. 11.

The candidates were examined both in the knowledge of the subject and in the method of teaching it. The standard of education had been prescribed from time to time by the Board of Studies in Education.

It would be very interesting to make a mention of the syllabus which had been taught in that Teachers' Training College so as to judge the standard of that College. When compared to the Modern Training College of any Indian Universities.

The syllabus for the paper of Indian Citizenship and Physical Culture had been prescribed time to time by the Faculty of Arts. The other papers were as follows:-

History of Education: A Survey of Ancient System of Education with special reference to India. Educational progress in the Middle Ages in Europe with special reference to important Educational reformers. Modern developments and tendencies in Education.

Some Books Prescribed on the History of Education

Bhagavan Dass:	The Law of Manu in the Light of Theosophy (the Chapter on Education)
Woodward:	Studies in Education during the Renaissance
Adamsen:	Pioneers of Education in the 17th Century
Watson:	Theory and Practice of Education in the 18th Century.
Quick:	Educational Reformers
N. N. Mazumdar:	A History of Education in Ancient India

- Rai Sarat Chandra) Universities in Ancient India
Das Bahadur) : (Hindustan Review, March, 1906)
- Kautilya: Arthasastra (translated by Sarma Sastri)
- Laurie: Historical Survey of Pre-Christian Education.

The Government of India

- (a) Indian Educational Policy Resolution, 1913.
- (b) The Quinquennial Review on Indian Education.
- (c) The Universities Act, 1904.

Syed Mahmood: The History of English Education in India, 1781-1893.

The Theory and Practice of Education:

The Syllabus was as follows:-

Psychology, with special reference to the child and to the various stages of mental development. Inter-dependence of the physical, emotional and mental conditions. The psychology and physiology of the nervous system -- the nature and condition of interest, attention and fatigue. The training of memory, imagination and judgement. Freedom, Discipline and self-Discipline. The development of originality. The discipline of the muscles, their control and co-ordination in relation to the eye, ear, voice, hand etc. The differing temperaments of children -- their characteristics, powers and weaknesses. The relation of the teacher to the varying temperaments of his pupils. The relation of temperament to choice of profession. National temperament. The emotions of

the will. The moral sense. Habit. Esprit de corps and National spirit or Patriotism. Religion and Patriotism in relation to home, school and college. Service: home, community, and generally social. Physical education, with special reference to healthy and defective children. Medical and mental clinics. The Problems of Sex. School Organization and management. Apparatus and Furniture. The curricula, courses of study, time-tables. The interval. Play, games and exercises -- supervised and unsupervised. The classification of subjects with reference to their educational and practical value. The relation of School studies to temperament. Examinations -- external, internal, and the combination of the two. Notes of lessons. Classification of pupils. Records of progress. Home activity in relation to the School or College. School hygiene and sanitation. The adaptation of the School organization to individual needs. The school and college as miniature nations -- training for citizenship. The relation of the school to its surroundings. School and college Self-Govt. Methods of Teaching, e.g.. Expository, catechetical, Experimental.

A Special Subject: One of the following:-

- (a) Primary Department Methods, (b) Manual Training,
- (c) Mathematics, (d) Domestic Science & Home Craft,
- (e) History and Geography, (f) Science, including Nature study and Gardening, (g) Music, (h) Physical Culture,

including scouting (i) English, (j) An Indian language (including Sanskrit, Arabic, etc.) (k) Religion, (l) Commerce, (m) Drawing and Painting etc.

The candidates for the degree of B.T. were required to study for one year in a recognized institution, the history, theory and practice of Education, the latter to include six week's teaching in a recognized school, the whole of the second year was spent in teaching in some recognized institution. The candidate had to produce a certificate that he had attended 75 per cent of the lectures in the history, theory and practice of Education, and that he had been a regular teacher in a recognized school for the second year. The opinion of the Headmaster as to his proficiency in teaching was required to be attached. The candidate was examined in the history, theory and practice of Education at the end of the first year, and the degree had been conferred upon him at the end of the second year without further examination provided the Board of Examiners had been satisfied as to his proficiency in teaching, after periodical inspection of the candidates work, and on receiving a satisfactory report from the Headmaster concerned.

A candidate for the degree of B.T. who failed in one or more subjects of the examination was required to appear at the ensuing examination only in those subjects.

The syllabus and the requirements fulfilled by a candidate for the degree of B.T. as has been stated above clearly show that how methodical and modern was Annie Besant in her scheme of Teacher's education. In some cases this scheme seems more practical as compared with the modern system of preparing teachers in many teachers' training colleges of India. In her scheme the inclusion, among the subjects of examination, of "Indian citizenship" gave the students a sense of the honour and of the practical duties of his citizenship of India. The inclusion of a course in "Physical Culture" -- theoretical and practical, was supplementary to that in "Indian Citizenship", and of vital importance in as much as every student was expected not merely to understand the structure and functions of his body but to keep it in such health as would be possible. Religion was also taught to the candidates, but it did not form a subject of examination -- the aim was to vivify the students mind and emotions with the spirit of Religion rather than with its dogmas, forms or ceremonies. Special stress was laid on the fact that religious differences were by no means necessarily obstacles to National Unity, since each religion was to draw its own special representation of the truth from a single source common to all faiths alike -- one God.

Under the heading "The History, Theory and Practice of Education" Annie Besant meant that the pupil teachers would

be trained to develop in their pupils a spirit of co-operative individualism, so that while each individual capacity would be stimulated to the utmost, every power should be recognized as dedicated to the common ends of the Nation, and as a force for the exploitation to fellow-citizen. Citizenship began from the very birth: the rights of citizenship from the very day of birth itself. Its duties began in the home, while in school and college the lesson of co-operative citizenship was to begin to be understood both in its theory and its practice special stress was laid on the Indian point of view with regard to the teacher, and a glimpse of the teacher in the ancient Hindu polity was only to give an inspiring conception of the position of the teacher and how the teacher should occupy the same position in the modern state.

The understanding of psychology and educational psychology was to show to the pupil teachers that every child has a definite inborn, God-given desire to grow, and that the primary duty of the teacher was to strive to understand how best to put that desire into activity and to encourage the child to transmute, neutralise or overcome the various obstacles as they presented themselves on his path.

Annie Besant also encouraged the training of women teachers along the lines similar to those for the training of men, at any rate in principle though their functions differed. Later on when Dr. Maria Montessori arrived in

India and remained for many years in Madras, very close to Annie Besant, a training school was started exclusively for women. Annie Besant popularized the Montessori system of Education by introducing it in her schools. She got trained many Indians under Dr. Montessori's personal instructions. She financially helped Miss Barrie, a trainee under Dr. Montessori, to establish schools and train teachers for Indian schools.

In 1920 Annie Besant established The Fellowship of Teachers with the object of "To serve the Motherland through Education". The following were the Principles of the Fellowship, which she had explained in the weekly supplement to her newspaper "New India of 16th October, 1920.

Principles of the Fellowship of Teachers:

"The Fellowship of Teachers believe that National Education, to be effective must be based on the following principles:-

"1. It must be religious in spirit, emphasising:-

(a) The supreme and fundamental unities underlying all faiths, while affording every young citizen the necessary facilities for instruction in his own individual creed.

(b) The common origin and common goal of all kingdoms of Nature towards that ideal of perfection already achieved by the teachers who are owed a common reverence from the members of all faiths.

"2. It must be patriotic in tone, training the Nation's young citizens:-

(a) To draw inspiration from their traditional and historic part, to regard that part -- whatever the dominant creed or civilization -- as a common heritage, the great Men of all periods and faiths being the common heroes of the race.

(b) To have confidence in the greatness of the future.

(c) To fulfil such duties of citizenship as may be appropriate to their years.

"3. It must be based on those principles of ordered Freedom and mutual service through which alone true growth takes place

"Application of the Principles

In application of the above principles the Fellowship of Teachers stand for the following specific means:-

"1. The Central National Education by the Nation, with National Ministers of Education and educational officers, of all grades, responsible to the people through their popularly elected representative bodies.

"2. The gradual introduction of free, and then compulsory, education to the end of the high school course, University Education ultimately becoming free to all able and eager to benefit from it.

"3. The awakening of the public conscience with regard

to the place of education in National life, special insistence being laid, in the interests of National Vitality, on the public duty of ensuring to every child the opportunity, to receive sufficient and suitable food, first for the physical body, second for emotions, and third for the mind.

"4. The special encouragement of the education of girls, in as much as the heart of National life lies in the women of the Nation.

"5. The co-ordinating and directing control being at a centre, in the hands of the National Minister and his advisers and staff, there should however, generally the local responsibility for local educational activities; local representative bodies, for example, in India, Village Panchayats, Taluqa, District Boards, being given, as far as possible, both powers of initiative and responsibility in local educational affairs.

"6. The inclusion, as far as possible, in school curricula of Sanskrit for Hindu Youths, Pali for Buddhist youths, Arabic for Musalman youths, so that every youth may be able to read in the original, and to some extent to understand, the scriptures of his faith.

"7. The special encouragement in all educational institutions of the cult of beauty and rhythm, especially through music and fine arts.

"8. The encouragement of education in the mother-tongue, and the endeavour to find a satisfactory solution of the

problem of a National language.

"9. The construction of the curriculum in such a way that every youth, girl or boy, acquires self-dependence as regards personal affairs of daily life and, at least as regards boys, leaves school able to earn a living, preferably in a pursuit vital to National Growth.

"10. The insistence on physical, emotional and mental culture, so that the various faculties and modes of consciousness, interact harmoniously, and are duly subordinate to the will, imparting to every youth grace and strength of body, refinement of emotion and a sound intellectual taste.

"11. The total abolition of fear and punishment as supposed incentives to study and discipline, and especially the prohibition of the barbarism of corporal punishment -- demoralising alike to teacher and the student".

The Principles of the Fellowship of Teachers and their application clearly provide, the summary of the scheme of National Education as was visualized by Annie Besant. All the items of the Fellowship pertain to the fields in which she laboured hard throughout her life to establish schools and colleges for the cause of National education.

9. Night Schools:

Annie Besant was greatly in favour of opening Night Schools in India for those who were employed in the day in some form of livelihood. She wanted that all children upto the age of eighteen must be kept under some educational control. Those who could not go to the ordinary day school, being born or brought up in poor and backward homes, were offered chances to receive education in Night schools.

Suggesting a workable scheme for the Night Schools, Annie Besant wrote: In the case of the younger children that come to these schools, dealing..... with children earning a livelihood, you have to consider whether you cannot make your education helpful to them in the vocation which they have taken up. The great fault to a large extent of the education of the children, especially of the poor, has been that instead of making it vocational, it has been entirely apart from the ordinary life, and the result is that the brain is not trained in a fashion which will enable it to apply the training intelligently to life. The effect of the education upon the poor is to drive them to the most underpaid and overworked class of the community of the semi-educated clerk. It is not that class you want to increase. You want to give to the boys and girls a means of earning their bread which will increase the wealth of the country as well as the wealth of the individual and enable them to

earn a livelihood which will put them beyond a continual struggle for bread."¹

Annie Besant drafted a plan of Night School in which she had forcefully pressed the utility of the training of the hands, the senses and the intelligence of the children. In her scheme of Night Schools she proposed to give short and varied lessons. She wrote: "The attention of a child, especially of a child that has been working during the day is difficult to hold. When you are dealing with young children, you will find that the very moment the attention begins to wander it is well to change the subject of the teaching. With regard to the older pupils who come to these night schools and who belong to the labouring classes, you will find that they are very little interested in information that bears upon their ordinary work and life, but in village schools..... they are eager to learn by taking part in repetition of what is read, rather than learning in modern fashion. Enormous good would be done by having talks with such pupils on subjects such as sanitation, hygiene, conditions of the body, and things which interest them in everyday life".²

Annie Besant felt interested in the formation of co-operative societies of the pupils in the night schools. She understood that with co-operative efforts their most essential needs could be fulfilled. She wrote: There is

1. Annie Besant: "Night Schools", in the 'New India' of 30th April, 1918, p.9.

2. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, pp.458-59.

no quicker way to help people crushed by debts borrowed at exorbitant interest than to start such societies and help them to pay off their debts at easy rates of interest".¹

With a keen interest and encouragement of Annie Besant a large number of Night Schools were started in many parts of India. The Theosophical Educational Trust initiated a movement of establishing Night Schools. In 1917 many Night schools were established at Madanpalle, Chittoor District. These schools attracted a very large number of boys and girls. Powerful Kitzon lamps were provided in these schools.

In these schools at Madanpalle the voluntary work of teaching was taken up by the students of the Madanpalle school and college under the able direction of M.R.Ry.D. Rajagopalachariar. By running the night schools the boys learnt the happiness of working for others, thus they acquired true human knowledge and experience which rendered them unselfish and useful citizens in their manhood.

All the above explained aspects of Indian education which were dealt with by Annie Besant, one by one, had been greatly enriched and elaborated by her and thus she provided detailed solution for all of them.

Writing about Annie Besant's valuable contribution to the Indian education her biographer, Theodore Besterman,

1. Night Schools, Op.cit. p.9.

wrote; "Fewer would have had the courage and patience to continue against all opposition on the path to the desired goal. But who else than Annie Besant could have added to these things the knowledge and patience, which not satisfied with establishment of the College, wrote some of its most important text-books, organized its boys into debating-clubs, into sports-organizations, bade them join physical development to intellectual training, lectured to them and in short, treated them in such a way that in India today there are thousands of men who addressed Annie Besant as "Mother".¹

Thus with her tireless efforts Annie Besant filled many details into rough picture, of the model education, which she had outlined in 1885, when she had written in her article 'The Redistribution of Political Power' that "I look forward to a time when every child shall receive in the national schools the elements of a literary, scientific, artistic and technical education; when neither boy nor girls shall leave the school ignorant of the glories of our literature, of the wonders of science, of the delight in beauty, of some definite means of bread-winning. Be it tailoring or dressmaking, or cookery, or carpentering, or any one of the many trades needed in a civilised society, every pair of hands should be able to do at least some one

1. Besterman, Theodore: Mrs. Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet", pp.198-99.

thing well, by which a living may be honestly earned. The maturity that follows a youth spent in such training will be useful to the State, and enjoyable to the individual; and such a maturity it should be the object of educational laws to make possible for every citizen".¹

Annie Besant had made this as an outline for her future plan of educational activities in India and she never departed from it, though she had to face hostile criticism by her enemies and sometimes by her nearest friends even.

1. Annie Besant: The Redistribution of Political Power, p. 30.

CHAPTER - VIII

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF ANNIE
BESANT'S WORK AS AN EDUCA-
TIONAL THINKER.

Having surveyed the educational philosophy, educational experiments and contribution to Indian education of Annie Besant, we may now attempt a broad assessment of her work as an educational thinker.

It is a strange phenomenon that an active politician and philosopher to be a most serious educator of country's education and devoting the best part of her life, energy and resources to the cause of Indian education. Annie Besant pleaded in this context that for material and political prosperity of India a well developed and systematically planned educational programme is very essential. In her lecture "India's Awakening" she stated: "When the educational life has again been pervasive then only can material prosperity safely return".¹ When she arrived in India in 1893 she found very unsatisfactory conditions of Indian education. She saw that education was too bookish and mechanical, stereotyped and rigidly uniform and did not cater to the different aptitude of the children. Nor did it develop those basic qualities of discipline, co-operation

1. Annie Besant: India's Awakening (a lecture) p.2.

and leadership which were calculated to make children function as useful citizens. There was no place of spiritual, religious and moral culture in the educational system. Apart from the positive suffering which these conditions entailed, the Indian education had no place for freedom to perform any creative activities.

It was therefore quite natural that the prevailing system of education with its narrow aim and lifeless methods produced a deep dissatisfaction in her mind when she studied thoroughly the Indian educational system. She felt an acute spiritual unrest deep in her soul when she found the Indian educational system, which has taught religious and philosophical education for age to the west, again shrouded in Godless and unreligious educational system. She impressed upon her theosophical colleagues and other educated people in India for the need for religious and moral education. Thus the foundation of the C.H.C. Benares was laid in 1898.

Annie Besant had not founded the C.H.C. to experiment on any new educational theory. It is none the less true that when she arrived in India her mind had already been pre-occupied with certain fundamental principles and the general pattern that she was about to start. Ten days before her actual arrival in India for the first time, on

November 6th, 1893 in a lecture delivered on board the Kaiser-i-Hind, she had said "India's future lies not in political greatness; India's future is as a spiritual nation, as the teacher of the world in spiritual truth".¹ Annie Besant had herself admitted that the picture of the education imparted in the Vaidic India had inspired her imagination for long through her studies of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Vedas, and it was for these epics that she had devised a pattern of education which she adopted in its essentials for the C.H.C. Benares, because of its intrinsic educational value and also its great message for the modern India. It should however be stated that Annie Besant was not a solitary example in turning to Vaidic Indian traditions for inspiration for her educational ideas, but as we have already explained the other educational contemporaries of Annie Besant in the first and second chapters of this dissertation, it would be sufficient to say here that in the wake of Indian educational reform movement, inaugurated by the Brahmosamajists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others, there was a general upsurge in the country to glorify the past achievements of India and to revive some of their salient features in the educational and other fields of Indian life, as a result a long array of educational

1. Annie Besant: India, Her Past and Her Future, compiled in 'The Birth of New India', p.59.

institutions were to be seen all over India on lines somewhat similar to those of the Central Hindu College, Benares, notably Shantiniketan by Rabindra Nath Tagore and Gurukula at Hardwar by Swami Shirdananda.

It was not mere accident that Annie Besant chose historically important places and sites for her educational institutions. Annie Besant was a great lover of art, traditions and history. While choosing Benares for the site of her college and her schools, Madanapalle for the site of her National University, she gave the clear proof of her love for educational traditions.

General appraisal of Annie Besant's educational works:

While attempting to make a general appraisal of Annie Besant's educational works, we find several broad points at once strike us as significant and impressive.

The very first point is the sheer volume of Annie Besant's educational writings and addresses. Many of her addresses have not been recorded, and even if recorded, have been little known, being buried in the oblivion of unfamiliar journals and documents. Many of her writings also may have been lying in similar obscurity. The letters that she wrote to numerous friends and colleagues on educational topics must be legion, out of which only a fraction has been printed by Arthur Nethercot and Esther Bright. But the amount of her writings that is more or less accessible

and familiar is, nevertheless, impressive.

The bibliography of her writings alone lists nearly 107 separate items of essays, addresses and pamphlets, the 8 text-books planned and prepared by Annie Besant, and the various items found in a variety of publications of miscellaneous nature. This refers only to those writings which have been traced or properly collected in familiar books and takes no account of all the numerous letters, unrecorded or undiscovered addresses, writings lying in obscurity.

The time factor is also quite significant. Even if we start calculating from 1874 when her first educational writing, "On the Religious Education of Children" was published and come down to "Ideals of Education in Ancient India" an address in the All Asia Educational Conference, Benares on 27th December, 1930, her last popular address; we find that Annie Besant thought, wrote and spoke on educational subjects for a full stretch of fifty-six years. Her activities as a practical educator dating from 1898 when she established the C.H.C., Benares and her close contacts with the day-to-day working of the various institutions that she had started, made her to understand and solve the problems of Indian education. In this course of more than half a century, she was closely connected with most of the major educational movements in the country, either participating directly in the deliberations of the sponsors of

those movements or offering her opinion and counsel through writings and addresses.

Annie Besant had been known in India and abroad not only for her political, philosophical, religious and social work, but also, above all, for her educational work especially for her founding the C.H.C., Benares. Though her excellent work as a public worker had been commemorated at the Queen Hall London Jubilee Demonstrations on July 23, 1924 where more than 500 delegates from many and various organizations, representing almost every branch of progressive work in the world were present to congratulate Annie Besant for her triumphs in all her public activities, but more laudably were appreciated her educational ventures. Although Annie Besant's educational theories and schemes have not been studied at all as they should have been, but the C.H.C., Benares and her National University have been fairly well-known in knowledgeable circles as very progressive centres of education and culture.

Annie Besant not only lectured and wrote on educational problems for more than half-a-century but she was also a practical educator in the real sense of the term, in as much as she founded and ran a number of educational institutions, where she conducted her pioneer experiments in the practical fields and herself taught classes at different periods for a considerable length of time. Some

great educators in the history of education also like Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey had the distinction of playing this dual role of an educator and a teacher.

Annie Besant's recognition as an educational thinker, may be said to have started with the publication of her small article "On the religious education of children" when she was hardly of twenty-seven years. It attracted the attention of some educational experts. Charles Bradlaugh, the author and politician, appointed her as a joint-editor to assist him and write articles covering social and educational issues. In November 1888 Annie Besant was elected as a member of the London School Board, thus coming in touch with the practical problems of education. When she arrived in India in 1893 she began to take active interest in the educational problems of the country. She wrote articles in newspapers about Indian education. It would be useless to note here the long list of her educational articles which were printed in the papers and journals of India. It is also a wastage of time to account for the numerous convocation and inaugural addresses delivered by Annie Besant at universities and educational institutions of India, the last being her convocation address to the University of Mysore, delivered on October 29th 1924 and a series of Kaula Lectures entitled "Indian Ideals in Education,

Philosophy and Religion, and Art" for 1925 in the Calcutta University. The above facts should undoubtedly serve to prove that Annie Besant's recognition as a leading figure in the world of education had been established for long.

There was hardly any important educational problem of fundamental nature which escaped Annie Besant's notice and to which she did not supply any workable solution. The first breath of any significant movement in the educational atmosphere stressed her being, and she fanned it with all the force of her mighty personality, till it gathered strength and volume enough to assume the character of a regular movement. This was so when she first started championing the cause of the mother tongue both as a subject of study and as a medium of instruction. The same thing happened with the movement for mass-education and rural reconstruction, which acquired force with the passage of time.

Criticism of Annie Besant's Educational Work:

Annie Besant has been criticised by some critics for repetition of ideas in her works and for too much stress on spiritual values in her schemes of education.

(1) Duplication of Ideas:

The charge of duplicacy of ideas laid against Annie Besant as an educational thinker is partly true. She herself has confessed to it in different contexts. This

defect of repetition is greatly found in her lectures because she was not a cold arm-chair intellectual but was a practical educator. Because she had to make tours of whole of the world to deliver her message and influence always a new audience by her lectures, therefore some repetition had to occur in her printed lectures. Prof.K.G. Saiyidain makes an interesting observation in this context. Apologizing for repetition of ideas in his book, "Education and International Understanding" he writes: "There is a repetition of ideas, which would be out of place in a systematic thesis but may perhaps be overlooked in a collection of this kind, if only because they serve to stress and underline certain ideals and values which I regard as supremely important and which cannot -- if I may say so be emphasized too much in the present set up of the world".¹ Both the pleas in the above observation fully apply to Annie Besant.

Because of the availability of repetition of ideas in her works, it does not mean that Annie Besant's thinking had been entirely static and did not register any growth of evolution. The preceding chapter would disapprove any such wrong inference: for it would amply bear out how Annie Besant's constantly alert and sensitive mind reacted to the important events of educational significance in the country and abroad, and how her educational thought and activities

1. Saiyidain, K.G: Education and International Understanding, p.11.

underwent modifications and evolution from time to time.

(ii) Stress on Spiritual Value:

Another objection that may be raised against Annie Besant's scheme of education by materialistically inclined critics, is its emphasis on spiritual values. She greatly stressed the inclusion of Religion in the life of school and college. "There is no knowledge" she wrote "more necessary for a boy than the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of his religion. This knowledge should therefore be imparted to him to simple elementary form in school, and in further detail in college".¹ We have seen in the previous chapter the importance of religion in her scheme for all the levels of education.

But the emphasis laid on religion may appear to a modern mind too vague and against the background of the increasingly insistent secular needs of modern life, which would much rather demand social and economic efficiency and democratic leadership than would suffer the vital issues to be confused and clouded by spiritual considerations.

But the stress on religious and spiritual values, in the secular context, has not become obsolete in modern educational thought and is to be found even in progressive

1. Annie Besant: "The Place of Religion in the Life of a Student", compiled in 'The Birth of New India', p.393.

educational circles. Indeed there is a firm consideration and awareness among educational thinkers that the most of the ills of the modern education are the outcome of the want of religious inspiration.

Sir Richard Livingstone, while discussing the conditions of University Education in England in 1947, regretted that there was little place in it for meditation on God, contemplation on the higher values of life and recommended "some study of religion or philosophy or of both should be included"¹ in all the courses in the universities especially for under-graduates. Prof. Brubacher also stressed that "the reversion to an emphasis on religious education was a more significant event than might appear on the surface".² Even great educational thinkers of modern India like Vivekananda, Dayananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Tagore and Rama Tirath, have all demanded the religious and spiritual orientation of education.

The above references are only to show that Annie Besant's emphasis on religious and spiritual values is not old-fashioned or out of place need, she had given a right lead to a significant movement in recent educational thought.

Annie Besant's Original Contribution to Education:

In concluding this work a question can be invariably

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1. Livingstone, Sir Richard: 'Some Thoughts on University Education', p.
 2. Brubacher, John S: A History of the Problems of Education, pp. 353-54.

asked "what has been Annie Besant's original contribution to Education?" Every great educator is required to pass the test like the rest. Before the question is answered with reference to Annie Besant, it would be necessary to make some preliminary considerations.

If 'original' means something completely new, few great educators of the past can ever be regarded as 'original' because the history of education bears that either they reflect some past thought or have formulated into powerful operation some contemporary trend of thinking, having given a local colour and name. Secondly, the mere fact of resemblance between the earlier and a later thinker does not bring the conclusion that the former has influenced the latter. Finally, even if a successor reflects the ideas of a predecessor on a particular aspect, the approach of the two to the same aspect may be quite different.

Annie Besant was no more completely 'original' than great educators like Plato, Rousseau, Dewey and Gandhi because she reflected as much as they, some past or contemporary thought. In the second chapter of this work we have attempted to assess the various influences on Annie Besant, which proves that her educational ideals had deep and powerful roots and did not originate in the air. It is the great merit of Annie Besant's educational thought that it reflected so much of the excellent educational

thoughts of the world, past and present.

She organized ideals, principles and methods borrowed from the greatest educators and thus formulated a workable scheme of education which was a combination of Indian and Western educational thoughts. Thus her educational ideas and experiments appeared strikingly fresh and original. She was thus the greatest prophet of National Education for her revolt against the unrealistic and mechanical system of education that had obtained a deadening hold on the country since the introduction of the Western system of education under the British. She waged a battle to uphold the highest educational ideals before the country and made experiments at her educational institutions.

One outstanding distinction of Annie Besant's educational work is that it represents a synthesis of the educational ideals and methods of the East and the West. This is a valuable contribution and it reflected her philosophy of life when she says "whether it be from one side of the world to the other, there is only One Life, and we are one in Him, and we shall bring the outer lands together because the Inner Life is ever one".¹ It is well known that Annie Besant, though Irish by birth, was a foremost ambassador of eastern culture to the west, this was also true in her comparatively specialized field of education.

1. Annie Besant: Speech in the Annie Besant Queen's Hall - Jubilee Demonstration, July 23rd, 1924, p.24.

Though the genius of Annie Besant is very great as she has formulated a sublime system of education in a detailed and clear manner; though her system clarifies all the aspects of human experiences and tries to amalgamate the best of Indian and European philosophical and educational thought to evolve a practical educational solutions for the ills of people of India; yet her critic, Geoffrey West believes that Annie Besant "originated nothing, gave nothing to the world which otherwise it must have lacked but which now is its imperishable heritage that what she did was simply - it is a great service -- to hasten processes already existing. The modern spirit would have come to birth without her, even had it been born more difficulty, after delay. She has been in this respect an assistant than a creator; she has added to the sum total of progress only relatively and though her immortality in her work can be considered assured, it is not unlikely to be an anonymous immortality".¹

Geoffrey West's criticism though is hostile towards her contribution but it regards, no doubt, her work of some assistance, if not a creation, to the cause of service of her fellow beings. Her great contribution to the cause of Indian education cannot become worthless only by unsympathetic criticism of any one writer. Kanji Dwarkadass

1. West, Geoffrey: The Life of Annie Besant', p.263.

writing about Annie Besant says "when she landed in India for the first time in November 1893, she found educated Indians were inclined to hang their heads in shame at their culture and their past. They accepted meekly the superior and patronising criticisms from uninstructed critics as valid and it was impossible for Macaulay to assert that there was more truth and consolation to be deprived from a single English book than from all the literature of the East. But Mrs. Besant changed all this. If today the Indian feels proud of his past and hopeful of his future, if he is proud that his country is an important member of the comity of nations, these beliefs were created and fostered principally by Mrs. Besant, who popularised Indian scriptures and made India acquainted with her own heritage... If one person more than other must be attributed the beginning of the feeling of true patriotism, hardly any will hesitate to mention the name of Annie Besant".¹

C. Jinarjadasa wrote in the 'Theosophist' of November 1947 about Annie Besant "Thousands, though most of them now gone, will have said of Annie Besant that, because a light shown through her, they who had set in darkness had "risen" to a wondrous discovery of themselves and of Life. Such is always the case with great souls who in our humanity are as yet only a few..... years ago she wrote in a friend's

1. Dvarkadas, Kanji: "Mrs. Annie Besant: An Architect of Modern India", Bharti Vidya Bhawan's Journal of March 29, 1964, p. 51.

album: "Climb for the sake of those behind". It was written in a book of extracts from her own writings; there is one sentence among them which reveals the soul of Annie Besant "I had rather be blinded by the light than sit wilfully in the dark". It is because of this glorious spirit in her in search of truth, at the cost of every suffering and sacrifice that we can all attest that God showed sufficient of His Light through her to us".¹

Annie Besant always worked to shed light of knowledge and wisdom on the others. Her work for education and religion inspired dozens of men and women who opened schools and colleges in India to serve the nation. In the early years of the twentieth century many youngmen were inspired by her to dreams of service of the nation. She accepted them as of her band just as they were, she did not ask of them any remarkable achievement, but she did ask the pure spirit of service. She changed their lives by the trust she placed in them to do their best, and her sympathy was always in their failures. She did not criticize them -- her criticism of them she kept to herself -- but she always encouraged them and uplifted them and prepared them to serve the nation fully and whole-heartedly.

There are many admirers of Annie Besant who applaud her work very much and consider her as the architect of

1. Jinarajadasa, C: "Annie Besant: The Light Bringer", in the Theosophist of November 1947, pp.114,117.

Modern Indian education. Besterman, who remained an active theosophist for many years, found some rare qualities of self-confidence, hunger for work and courage as the three great qualities appearing sufficiently to account for the phenomenon of her sufficiently to account for the phenomenon of her career while making a critical estimate Besterman wrote: Mrs. Besant was not a woman possessed of that magic force of personality which in itself leaves a mark on the world..... Those who knew Mrs. Besant as contemporaries think of her merely as an honest, energetic, able and eloquent woman. She lacked the magic touch. Nor had Mrs. Besant great intellect, though she was without doubt a woman of exceptional ability. She had a great facility for absorbing information, mastering it, and giving it out again in lucid terms. But abstractions, generalizations, philosophical thought, even analytical acuteness, were beyond her; and repeatedly fallible was her judgment".¹

When we go on piling views of different authors and critics on Annie Besant, it becomes a difficult task to arrive at a clear understanding of her true personality by merely keeping to one side the appreciation of friends and to the other the hostile remarks of the critics, to weigh her ideas, activities and writings. It would be

1. Theodore Besterman: "Mrs. Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet", p.269.

better if we try to understand her thought through her own writings. A passage from her essay on Auguste Comte, written in 1885 gives a reflection of her own mind, let it be applied to herself, she wrote:

"He may have been either right or wrong in his opinions; his speculation as philosopher, as religionist, as social reformer, are justly open to approval, to criticism, to reprobation; each individual has a right to form his own opinion on the work; but the worker himself should be reverently spoken of, and should be criticized without malice and prejudice..... His tender heart, his earnest and disinterested labour, his laborious and self-sacrificing life, his pure and noble character -- these are his titles to the admiration and homage of the Humanity he loved so well. Surely the race whose dignity he laboured to raise, whose toil he strove to cheer, whose woes he sought to lighten, should at least read him before they condemn. Some generous attention is due at least to him, who might have raised himself to power and affluence if he had turned his mighty talent to his own ends, but who chose instead, to dedicate every power to serve mankind, and who took as the motto of his life, "Vivre pour autrui".¹

1. Annie Besant: Auguste Comte: His Philosophy, His Religion, and His Sociology, p.38.

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A GLOSSARY OF THEOSOPHICAL TERMS CITED

Absolute:	The All, the one Reality, both Being and non-Being.
Atma:	The Universal Spirit. Atma in Union with Buddhi forms the "Sprit" of man, spoken of also as the "Higher Self".
Avatara:	The incarnation of a "God", i.e., of a lofty spiritual being, in which the 'God' retains all his divine powers.
Bhagavad Gita:	An episode in which great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, containing the highest ethical teaching in Hindu exoteric works. Really an occult treatise.
Brahman or Brahma:	Identical with the Vedantic Parabrahman, the Absolute Brahma, is the creative potency, or male-female deity.
Deva:	The Hindu name for a God or Demon. Used generally for entities inhabiting planes above the physical.
Dharma:	In the popular sense, justice, law hence, rule of conduct, religion.
Esoteric:	Inner, hidden. The meaning underlying forms and dogmas.
Exoteric:	The publicly stated truths, or the outward veils of concealed verities.

- Higher Self:** Atma, in its Vehicle Buddhi.
- Individuality:** The immortal part of man, that reincarnates age after age.
- Kama:** The passions, desires, emotions and appetites belonging to the animal body and brain.
- Karma:** Literally, action. The sequence of cause and effect, the chain which links all actions and their results, the law of equilibrium, bringing all finally into harmony - justice, ruling all words.
- Mahatma:** Great Spirit. The name given to highly evolved and living men, who have developed spiritual nature and mastered the physical and passional.
- Mandara, or Mantram:** A sentence, in which the words are rhythmically arranged so as to generate certain vibrations, calculated to produce certain effects.
- Maya:** Illusion. All the appearance of things, mind being the reality that creates all appearances.
- Mysticism:** The philosophy that deals with spiritual things.
- Nirvana:** The state of absolute knowledge, universal consciousness, consciousness expanded to embrace the All.

Occultism:	The study of the universal Mind in Nature, In practice, study by special methods necessitating the observance of prescribed rules of life.
Plane:	A stage of manifestation, or state of consciousness.
Prana:	The vitality, or the breath of life. It is the universal life individualized in an organism; on the death of the body it animates, it goes back into the ocean of Kosmic life.
Psychic:	A term very loosely used to cover faculties above the physical.
Puranas:	Hindu Mythological writings.
Reincarnation:	The indwelling of the immortal individuality of man in successive personalities.
Rig Veda:	The most ancient of the Vedas, consisting of 1017 Sutras or hymns.
Rishi:	A sage, through whom great truths are conveyed to Humanity from loftier intelligence.
Shastra:	A general term for the Hindu religious and philosophical writings.
Soul:	A term unfortunately used loosely. It is used as "the Animal Soul" (Kama) and as "the Rational" or "Human Soul" (Manas). It ought to be confined to the mortal passionate principle in man and animals.
Theosophy:	Literally, wisdom of the Gods, or universal wisdom. A name given by the Alexandrian philo-

- Theosophy:** Literally, wisdom of the Gods, or universal wisdom. A name given by the Alexandrian philosophers to the ancient wisdom - Religion, the Hidden Wisdom in the third century A.D.
- Upanishads:** Mystical treatises on the Vedas, standing between the exoteric and the full esoteric meaning.
- Vedanta:** One of the great Hindu Schools of philosophy; it was founded by Vyasa, and has, as its greatest teachers, Shankaracharya. It is more nearly allied to the wisdom-Religion than any other School.
- Vedas:** The ancient Sanskrit Scriptures of the Hindus, three very ancient -- the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda -- and one, the Atharva Veda, comparatively modern. They consist of mantras -- metrical hymns -- collected together under the title of Sanhita, and of Brahmanas, prose treatise.
- ^idya:** Knowledge, from the root vid, know.
Union. Implicitly, union with the All, whether by way of concentration, meditation, or action.
It has been technically defined as "restraining modifications of the thinking principle".
Lower of Yoga.